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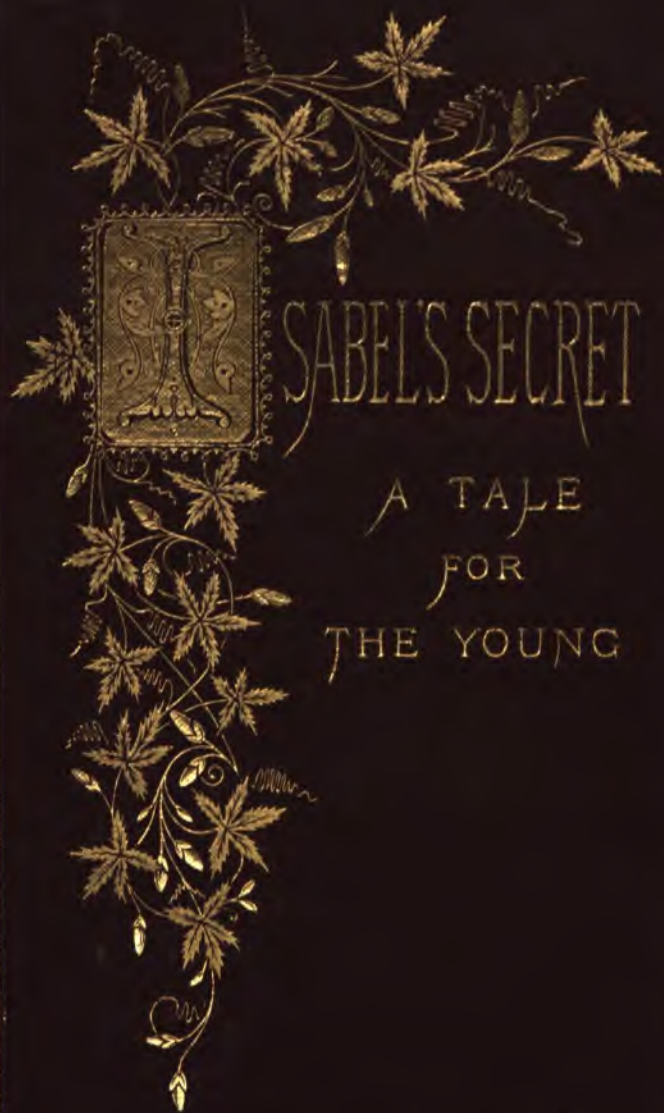
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SABEL'S SECRET

A TALE  
FOR  
THE YOUNG



6000698590







# ISABEL'S SECRET;

OR,

## A Sister's Love.

*By the Author of*

"THE STORY OF A HAPPY LITTLE GIRL."



---

"Only one thought, one power,  
Thee could have led  
So, through the tempest's hour,  
To lift thy head!  
Only the true, the strong,  
The love whose trust  
Bears heaven-taught souls along,  
Above the dust."

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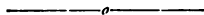




TO MY VERY DEAR LITTLE FRIEND,

**Helen Frances Stewart,**

THIS STORY IS DEDICATED, WITH THE EARNEST HOPE AND PRAYER  
THAT ISABEL'S SECRET MAY BE HERS.



"From a child *thou* hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are *able* to make *thee* wise  
unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."









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# ISABEL'S SECRET.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SISTERS' HOME.

“**T**HIRTY-EIGHT and five ! Thirty-eight and five ! Isabel, what are thirty-eight and five ?”

No answer, but a brisk murmur from the other end of the table :

“ *Un mendiant*, a beggar. *Un orphelin*, an orphan. *Une religieuse*, a nun.”

The first speaker, a little girl some seven years of age, shook back the long dark curls from her flushed cheeks, and looked wonderingly at her sister. “ Isabel, don’t you hear me ? I can’t do my sum, and I’ve been trying ever so long.” The voice trembled, and the bright eyes grew brighter with starting tears.

Isabel was recalled to herself—that sisterly, almost motherly self, which was so constantly

watchful to guard the little sister from trouble and annoyance ; she left her seat and her books, and came at once to settle the knotty arithmetical point.

“ Why did you not ask me to help you before ? ” she said, as she began rapidly to add the rows of figures.

“ I did ; but you didn't hear me. You have been so busy, you have not spoken or looked up once.

“ I am so sorry, Rose. Indeed, I did not mean to forget you. I have been very selfish ; but you will forgive me ? ”

Rose's answer was a tight hug and a shower of kisses. “ You won't do any more lessons,” she said, with such a coaxing face as only Rose could wear.

Isabel hesitated ; she glanced longingly at her books, then at the face, half-hidden in curls, that lay on her shoulder.

But the question was decided for her. The door opened, and a tall servant, dressed in the stiffest and ugliest of antiquated print gowns, and the plainest and most ponderous of mob-caps, entered the room.

“ Miss Isabel ! ” she exclaimed, with some indignation ; “ still at your books, and no place for the tea-tray, and Miss Rose not ready for bed.”

"I am just going to put them away," said Isabel, disengaging herself from Rose's clasp, and beginning to clear the table; "we are rather late, Martha; I am sorry I forgot the time."

"It's too bad," resumed Martha, rather to show that she was not to be appeased by Isabel's ready apologies than from any real feeling of anger. "I shall speak to your papa, Miss Isabel, if you treat your little sister so; you're not fit to have the care"—

"Martha!" exclaimed Rose, turning an angry face and flashing eyes towards Isabel's reprover; "how dare you say that to Isabel? And it's not true; she doesn't treat me. I'll tell papa!"

"Hush, Rose," said Isabel; her voice falling quiet and cool, like rain-drops after thunder. "You must not speak so to Martha. I am too late; but come with me, and we will be ready in ten minutes."

The little girl took her sister's hand, and suffered herself to be led from the room, and away from the temptation of replying to Martha—a temptation which even Isabel found it oftentimes hard to resist.

Yet Martha loved the children—her children, as she was proud to call them—with all the strength of her strong nature. She had tended them from the

first hour of their birth ; their joys and sorrows had been hers ; she had lifted them weeping and motherless from the embrace which would claim them no more ; she had wept for them, as they could not weep for themselves, over the tender forbearance and gentleness lost to them so early, and which she knew she was so far from supplying.

But all remembrance of hasty and discordant words was lost in the sweet atmosphere of peace and love which filled the little room where Rose, at her sister's side, repeated her evening hymn. The gentle clasp of Isabel's fingers over hers, the earnest look of those soft, grave eyes, hushed the restlessness of the little girl's nature ; and though, to her childish understanding, the meaning was dim, and but as the shadow of a beautiful mystery, the sweet words of prayer seemed to fill her heart,—

“ Shepherd of thy little flock,  
Lead me by the shadowing rock,  
Where the richest pasture grows,  
Where the living water flows.  
By that pure and silent stream,  
Sheltered from the scorching beam,  
Saviour, Shepherd, Guardian, Guide,  
Keep me ever near thy side.”

Then Rose was drawn down into her sister's arms, and many good-nights and kisses were exchanged before she was claimed by Martha.

"Tell papa to come up and kiss me," were her last words as Isabel left the room.

The parlour below was bright with its lamp and little fire, still acceptable these chilly April evenings. Isabel returned to her books, and had time for a little very hard work before the well-known foot-step and short decided knock were heard. The echo was hardly silent before she opened the door, and sprang, with a glad welcome, into her father's ready arms.

"My dear little girl!" he said, fondly; "and how are you?"

"Oh, very well. Come in," said Isabel, with a touch of Rose's eagerness in her voice, drawing him as she spoke into the room, and leading him to his seat by the fire. Then she waited on him, taking away his hat and overcoat, bringing his slippers, and, with joyful importance, watching the progress of her tea making.

"Now, papa," she said at last, "go and kiss Rose, and when you come back I will pour out your tea."

Mr. King had long been used to see the honours of his table done by his little daughter. Since the day, three years ago, when her mother, then lying on the bed from which she was never to rise, had sent her down "to keep poor papa company," Isa-



bel had never relinquished her right of presiding over his meal.

She hardly looked like a child of twelve, as she sat, with such grave composure, ministering to his wants. The head was more erectly poised, and the expression of the shadowy brown eyes had more earnestness than is often seen at twelve years; yet the mouth, and the smooth fair brow, with its short clustering curls, were almost infantine in their calm sweetness, and her conversation was very childish in its simplicity.

For Isabel's whole bringing up had been simple, fraught with such small joys and sorrows as their very secluded life on the outskirts of a large town could bring. This busy town claimed Mr. King from an early hour until the evening, and the two little girls were left, when they were not at school, to Martha's devoted, but somewhat stern, care and companionship. The pleasures were certainly more frequent and longer remembered than the cares. Papa's daily absence, indeed, was a sore trial; but it was one to which they had long been accustomed. Their solitude they called peace, and enjoyed it as as such; but now and then dawned days long—perhaps for ever—to be remembered, for the exceeding enjoyment they brought; days in which the calm moonlight of contentment was lost in the bright

sunshine of pleasure. Such were the first of every week, when they might claim their papa for the day, when they could give themselves up to the things that Isabel and her father most loved, when even Martha laid aside harshness, and was subdued and gentle. There were other holidays, too, when Mr. King took his children out, as far from the streets as might be ; and those flat green fields, shut in by houses, where they walked with their father, seemed then in the children's eyes more full of beauty and delight than any of the far away hills or luxurious valleys of which they read.

"And how did you get on at school?" said Mr. King, as, the weightier business being over, he sat leisurely sipping his last cup of tea.

"Very well, papa ; and what do you think ? Rose had the first mark for history in her class."

"Dear little Rose ! I am very glad. And you ?"

"I am still in the same place. And, papa, I am so sorry, Mary Rivers is not coming back to school any more."

"What is going to become of her ?"

"I don't know ; but Mrs. Mason—that is the person she lives with—will not send her any more now that her father is dead."

"Poor little girl ! And you don't know what is to become of her ?"

"No ; I suppose she will stay with Mrs. Mason ; but Mrs. Mason is not kind to her, I know."

"Poor little girl !" said Mr. King again, more to himself than to the child ; " without father or mother, a stranger in a strange house, hers is indeed a sad lot."

"You don't mind my going to see her, do you, papa ?" said Isabel.

"No."

"There, I told Martha we might. You know you said we could take a little walk when we came out of school ; and when we came home, Martha asked us where we had been, and she was so angry when we told her : she said that we must not go to Mrs. Mason's house, and that she should tell you and put a stop to it ; but I said I should tell you myself, and I knew she was wrong."

"Hush," said Mr. King. It was seldom he had to say "hush" to Isabel, and she blushed at the reproof. "Martha was more right than you are aware of. Mrs. Mason's is not a house I like you and Rose to be in ; but I should be sorry to prevent your going to see Mary. I think I can trust you to take care of Rose ; and I leave you both there, as elsewhere, under the shadow of the almighty wings. How could I leave you every day, were it not for that shadow, my child ?"

Isabel laid her head on her father's shoulder, and while she tried to realize the protecting love of her heavenly Father, she felt thankful that the type of it had been left to her below. But the more she thought of her own blessedness in this respect, the more did her heart flow out in loving sympathy to her friend, so early deprived of all earthly love and care.

"But God's care must be better," thought Isabel; "and how He must watch over us when there is nobody else. Poor Mary, I am glad she knows Jesus."

"It must be getting late," said Mr. King, presently; "and you look tired. Bring the books, dear, and then you shall go to bed."

Isabel went to a little bookcase which stood on a table in one corner of the room, and took from thence her own little Bible, her father's, and two hymn-books. Soon their voices sounded through the room, Isabel's childish treble rising clear and sweet above her father's sustaining bass. Then the chapter was gone through, each reading a verse in turn, interspersed with many questions and comments. Lastly, the prayer, with its earnest thanksgiving to God, who had once more brought the father back to his home in peace and safety; who had watched over the children all through the day;

who had brought those two, father and child, to a saving knowledge of Christ as their Redeemer. Then more earnest yet, if possible, was the cry of faith for their little Rose, that she too might be gathered with the arms of the Good Shepherd and carried in his bosom; and for Martha, that her spirit might be subdued, that her thoughts might be brought captive to his will whom Martha indeed knew and desired to serve. Lastly, the mention, solemn yet joyful, of the one member of that family who had already been taken home, with fervent thanksgiving to him who had made her to be numbered among those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, who are before the throne of God day and night, and serve him day and night in his presence."

Then Isabel wished her father good-night, and went away up-stairs to her own little room, where Rose already lay in a calm dreamless sleep.

Isabel's evening preparations did not occupy long. Martha came in less than half an hour for her candle, yet she had already been lying for some time surveying each familiar object with half-sleepy eyes.

Perhaps there was nothing among them all that you would have thought worth looking at once; certainly the room contained nothing rich or rare, saving only the warm beating hearts, rich in hope

and love, of the two little sleepers, and the precious words that a loving hand had once, in the far-away time, hung above each little bed. Over Isabel's were the words, "I laid me down and slept; I waked; for the Lord sustained me." And underneath, as if to direct the child's mind to the true awakening, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Little Rose seemed overshadowed with her mother's faith and prayers, breathed out in the words that hung above her, "He shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom;" "It is not the will of my Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish;" and lastly, more as a witness of the mother's firm faith in the promise, than for the child, "I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him until the last day."





## CHAPTER II.

### CROSS QUESTIONS AND CROOKED ANSWERS.

**T**HE children's way to school lay in Mr. King's direction, and he was generally able to walk with them to Miss Elliot's door. They thought it a very pleasant walk, though it led only through such quiet, dull streets as are generally to be seen in the outermost suburbs of a large town. On either side, square brown or red brick houses, each having in front a little railed enclosure, sometimes called a garden, and gay with a few primroses, tulips, or dahlias, according to the season.

Isabel and Rose took great pride and pleasure in their so-called garden. From a far-away corner, sheltered by a laurel-bush, many a sweet-scented bunch of violets had been gathered ; tufts of double, crimson-tipped daisies received their due share of attention, though rivalled by two small rose-bushes, producing more leaves than buds, more buds than blossoms, and more pleasure than either. London

pride, too—which might more aptly have been named Rose's pride—here lifted its delicate head on its stiff, thin stem. Isabel's one regret was that they could not count lilies among their treasures; but Rose had no thought beyond contentment, as, according to her usual habit, while Isabel collected the lesson-books, she ran into the garden to find a flower for papa—a flower which Mr. King would prize and cherish; which would have many a sweet voice for him through the day; and which, very often, would be brought back with him at night. There was little choice among the flowers now, and Rose soon returned to the gate where her father and sister were standing.

“A violet, papa!” she exclaimed; “a sweet violet.”

“A sweet violet! and a sweet Rose too, I think,” said Mr. King, giving a kiss of thanks to his happy little daughter.

“Not yet, papa,” replied the little girl, simply; “they're not out yet.” Then, reading her father's meaning by the look on his face, a sweet blush and smile broke over her own, and a childish, “Oh, papa!” was uttered, as she pressed the hand which she held.

“But we must not be late,” said Mr. King, shutting the garden-gate and taking his way along the



street. "What a number of books you have, Isabel!" as he took the pile from her hand.

"Hasn't she? and she does such lots of lessons," responded Rose, whose appetite in this line was easily satisfied; "she sits writing, oh, so long!"

Mr. King cast an anxious glance at Isabel. "Don't be too anxious to keep the head of the class," he said.

"I don't believe any of the other girls in the class do nearly so many lessons," interrupted Rose.

"Don't, Rose," said her sister, with visible distress.

"Oh, I'm not going to tell, because I promised not. You needn't be at all afraid;" and Rose looked up at her papa's face, half hoping he would question Isabel—not that she was an unkind little girl, but she could not enter into her sister's reasons for not wishing her ardent study to be mentioned, and she greatly disliked to find, in the pleasant garden of conversation, a pathway on which she must not enter.

But Mr. King did not inquire into this mystery; he felt pretty safe in trusting that Isabel's little secret, if secret there were, was of the simplest and most innocent description; so he turned the conversation into another channel, and soon they reached Laurel House.

There papa's parting kiss was given, and his last words of farewell and counsel spoken, and the little girls stood on the steps to watch him out of sight. Before he disappeared round the street corner, he turned to give the last look—which he knew they would expect; this Isabel answered with a nod, and Rose with a little flourish of the hand, half wave, half kiss; then they turned and opened the door.

It admitted them into a square, stone-paved hall, where they hung up their hats and cloaks; and then, opening the door on their right, entered the schoolroom.

Five of Miss Elliot's scholars, whose number was limited to eight, had already assembled. Miss Elliot herself sat at the head of the long, narrow table. To say that she was the pleasantest thing the room contained, would not have been saying much, for this last was of the very plainest description,—carpetless, and boasting but the long table before mentioned, a high bookcase, eight cane chairs for the scholars, and an arm-chair—called easy by those who did not sit in it—for Miss Elliot.

She did a great deal towards supplying the lack of ornament and comfort in the arrangements of the room: her face seemed to shine with cheerfulness and love; while her eyes, soft and yet bright, drew responsive glances from the some-

times dull looks that met hers ; and her small, somewhat plump figure, sat so comfortably in that uncomfortable chair, that her contentment, and indeed enjoyment, seemed to communicate itself to every object, and especially to every child, in the room.

The seats on each side of Miss Elliot, the places of honour and consideration, had long been held by the sisters. Isabel, as being head of her class, had one side ; Rose, as the youngest pupil, had the other ; but as she was taking her accustomed place this morning, an officious neighbour whispered,—

“ You’re not to sit there any longer.”

Rose, discomfited, appealed to Miss Elliot. “ It’s me to sit by you, isn’t it ? ”

“ It is I,” corrected Miss Elliot. “ But I am afraid you cannot claim this place any longer ; my new little scholar is nearly a year younger than you are. You must work your way round to Isabel’s place,” she added, seeing the blank look on the little girl’s face.

So Rose was obliged to relinquish her seat, and though she thereby made one step towards that of honour, she thought this poor comfort for a little girl, almost the youngest in the room, and who held a place at the head of her own class but very seldom and very insecurely. Isabel hardly liked to

find herself still enjoying her place at Miss Elliot's other side, when she saw the shadow on her little sister's usually bright face; but Rose's disappointment was very soon lost in delight and interest, for at this moment the door once more opened, and admitted the eighth scholar.

This little lady was dressed in a bright pink gingham, frilled with tiny flounces almost to the waist; and long ends of ribbon of the same bright colour mingled with the fair hair that floated, in tiny artificial waves, over her shoulders. A dainty manufacture of cambric and lace protected the front of her dress. She was a little child, much smaller than Rose; her eyes were light blue, and her complexion almost waxy in its whiteness. Rose thought her exactly like one of the dolls she had often seen and admired under glass cases in the shop-windows.

"What is your name?" said Miss Elliot, when she had shaken hands with the new-comer.

"Violetta," replied the child, and her voice was the only part of her that Rose could not admire.

Meantime, the daily routine was beginning. Miss Elliot had opened her Bible and read her verse; Isabel had read too, and was making signs to her sister to prepare for her approaching turn, for although Rose had opened her book, it was not at the right place, and her eyes were still fixed upon

her little neighbour. Nevertheless, the reading went on ; seven verses had been read, and the eighth was Rose's ; there was a pause, which made every one look up, and Rose perceived that they were waiting for her.

The dictation which followed the reading fared almost worse. Violetta stole her hand into Rose's, and entreated her assistance in spelling the word which was to head her page ; this so enchanted Rose, that she wrote merely as a supplementary duty, and spelt, if not without her eyes, certainly without her mind.

Unfortunately this was Wednesday ; the day for examination in the history which had been prepared yesterday.

"I hope you will keep your place, Rose," said Miss Elliot, by way of warning, before the lesson began ; and Rose, separated by two little girls from the object of her admiration, had a very fair chance of resolutely turning her mind from temptation and fixing it on her duty ; but a little girl's mind is a wilful thing, and hard to be ruled, and while she lets her eyes wander, it is but too likely that her thoughts will do the same.

"What was the surname of Henry II., King of England ?" was Miss Elliot's first question ; and Rose answered readily and correctly, "Plantagenet,"

so that her governess hoped the little fit of inattention was over.

But Rose's mind, once unhinged, could not, without a greater effort, be recalled to duty. This first difficulty over, she felt triumphant at finding herself undisturbed in her place, and forgot that in so small a class her turn would soon come again, and that it was harder to give appropriate answers if the preceding ones had not been listened to. She forgot to take all this into consideration. Far from attending, she was bending her head forward to peep at the fascinating Violetta, of whom she could discern nothing but the boots and a small expanse of stocking, open-worked ; Rose did not fail to observe that, and compare them with her own, much to the disadvantage of the latter.

In the midst of this edifying occupation, that relentless and ever-recurring enemy, her turn, came round again.

"How old was Henry VII. when he died?"

"Five," replied Rose, referring to the number of buttons on the interesting boots. Sophy Hunter, who sat beside her, broke into a stifled giggle, in which her neighbour and younger sister, Fanny, speedily joined.

"Rose, you are not thinking," said Miss Elliot, in her gravest tone.

Rose, thus recalled from the boots, tried hard to find an answer, but not having comprehended the question, she was obliged to have recourse to an ignominious "I don't know;" and the words were scarcely out of her mouth when Sophy eagerly replied, "Fifty-two," deposed Rose from her seat of honour, and, with wounding triumph, installed herself therein.

Miss Elliot hoped that this misfortune would sober the little girl, and that she might regain her place, or at least keep the one she had; but the very next question sent her a step lower; until at last even Violetta, making a lucky guess, told her that Henry VIII. succeeded Henry VII., and took her place; and the little girl, who had yesterday had the first mark for a far more difficult historical composition, now sat so low that she could fall no lower.

This, in her present mood, was some relief. She might relax her efforts and allow her fancy to roam more freely; she closed her eyes presently, and - tried to imagine herself arrayed in the bright gingham, lace-trimmed apron, and pink ribbons. This was a charming picture, but one which it required a great effort of imagination to bring to perfection.

It was very tiresome that her question always would come when she did not want it—yet here it

was, relentlessly waiting to cover her still further with confusion.

“What was the name of Henry the Eighth’s son?”

It seemed to Rose that she made a vigorous effort, but she could not even summon her thoughts from Dreamland sufficiently to comprehend what was required of her. After a moment’s pause, though dimly conscious that it was not the expected answer, she replied, “Pink.”

Sophy and Fanny could no longer control their merriment. Violetta looked round in bewilderment, not certain whether it were fun or earnest; the elder girls, who were preparing their exercises at the table, joined in the laugh. Isabel’s and Miss Elliot’s were the only grave faces; Isabel, indeed, felt nearer crying than laughing, when she saw her usually quick, though not studious sister, sitting so like a little dunce at the bottom of the class.

Miss Elliot, though so patient, and always so unwilling to punish a child if it could, by any other means, be brought to a sense of right, came at last to the conclusion that Rose required some aid to recall her scattered senses; so, shutting the history book, she called the little girl to her. “Your history lesson is over, Rose,” she said; “do you know what comes next?”



"The Scripture class," said Rose.

"Yes ; but I cannot allow you to join in it. I cannot have foolish answers made, nor laughing going on, while we are speaking about the Bible. You must sit behind me and listen attentively, that you may be able to write me an account of the lesson by-and-by."

Poor Rose was quite sobered now, and glad to hide herself behind Miss Elliot. Though able to be so foolish, her conscience had been too well trained not to show her at once that this was but the just punishment of her folly and wilfulness, and the tears that filled her eyes were purely of sorrow and self-reproach. But she soon recollected that attention to the next duty would do more than tears towards making amends for her past fault, and summoning all the intelligence and interest which generally characterized her, she was able to follow the lesson very accurately. By half-past twelve, the hour of separation, she had just recovered sufficient of her usual spirits to feel sorry when she saw that Violetta's nurse came to fetch her, and that, consequently, her new companion would not be among the number of those who, like herself and Isabel, spent the day, until four o'clock, at Laurel House ; but she did not venture to make any signs of farewell when Violetta passed her on her way out of

the schoolroom, as she considered herself still in disgrace.

"Here is paper, pen, and ink," said Miss Elliot, putting these materials before Rose. Then she left the room, and the little girl betook herself to her task.

It was pleasantly and speedily accomplished ; so speedily, indeed, that she had some leisure for reflection ere Miss Elliot returned.

"Your lesson is very well done," she said, when she had examined the paper. "I should feel great pleasure in it were its cause not so painful. I am glad to see that you have received your punishment so quietly ; and I hope that your submission proceeds not only from obedience to me, but that you have also understood your fault. Do you think you can tell me the cause of your morning's troubles?"

Rose paused awhile before she answered. She had not yet reflected upon the cause of her misfortunes. She understood, in a general way, that she had been naughty ; but the avowal of this fact would not, she considered, be a sufficient answer to the question, "What had been the cause of her troubles?"

Rose began to examine herself. Should she say that the history was difficult, or that she did not know her lesson ? No ; these could not be the true reasons, for it was a lesson which she felt sure she

could, at any other moment, have gone through with ease. Then what had made her unable to repeat it, when she was required to do so? She could answer that question readily; but the reply was humiliating, and it was given in a scarcely audible voice,—

“The little girl Violetta.”

“Violetta!” repeated Miss Elliot. “Perhaps she does seem to have been the cause of your inattention, but I think I shall be able to show you that you are mistaken. Supposing Isabel had been in your place, do you think she would have forgotten her lesson and all her duties, and allowed her eyes and thoughts to fix themselves on a little girl’s new face and bright dress?”

“No,” said Rose.

“No; I am sure she would not,” said Miss Elliot. “And yet Violetta would have been the same, so that the difference must be between you and Isabel. Shall I tell you what that difference is?”

“Yes,” replied Rose.

“It is the difference between a wandering heart and a fixed heart. My dear little Rose, can you understand this? Perhaps it seems to you a small thing to have a heart fixed on no particular object, but wandering about from one attraction to another; yet this thing—a wandering heart, which is the cause of wandering thoughts and wandering eyes—

is very contrary to God's Word. Your papa loves God's Word, your sister loves it, and I hope and believe, my dear little girl, that you love and wish to obey it too."

"Yes," said Rose.

"Listen, then, to what it says contrary to a wandering heart. David says, 'My heart is fixed, O God; my heart is fixed.' And when we say David, we mean the Spirit of God which inspired him; and, by that same Spirit, every child of God ought to be able with truth to say, 'My heart is fixed.' In the Psalms, too, we read, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord.' Paul said, 'One thing I do.' And Jesus himself has said, 'One thing is needful.' Thus you see that the Word of God does not speak of wandering, but of a heart fixed on *one thing*. And what is that one thing?"

Rose lifted her eyes to Miss Elliot's, and considered a moment before she replied, "Jesus Christ."

"Yes," said Miss Elliot; "Jesus Christ. He is the *one thing* which our hearts should desire; the *one thing needful* on which our hearts should be fixed."

Rose was silent; her understanding consented to the truth of what Miss Elliot had been saying, but her heart could not yet receive it. It was not yet fixed on the one thing. The attractions around her,

which so often called away and fixed her heart, could be seen with the natural eyes ; but the beauties of Christ were hidden, save from the sight of faith, and Rose had not yet that sight. There were many pleasant things in her—many of the qualities which God loves to see in a little child. There was a simple mind pleased with simple things ; a reverence for God's people and God's Word ; a heart overflowing with love, warm and intense, to her father and sister, to her many kind friends, and to whatever, by weakness or distress, called upon her sympathy. But one thing was wanting, and Christ has said, " But one thing is needful."

Perhaps Miss Elliot guessed what thoughts were passing in the child's mind, for she did not interrupt her meditations, and it was Rose herself who broke the silence.

" But, Miss Elliot, I may love the little girl ?"

" Not only you may, but you ought to," replied Miss Elliot ; " for God has said, ' Little children, love one another.' Only take care that you are not loving a pretty face and gay attire, while you forget to love that part of the little girl which will live for ever—that part which God so loved that ' He gave his only-begotten Son.' What is that part ?"

" The soul," said Rose. " But I like the little girl altogether."

"Are you sure?" said Miss Elliot. "Are you sure that you thought of the little girl's soul when you began to like her this morning? Will a little girl who loves her friend's soul—really loves it, as something for which Christ has died—will that little girl indulge her own foolish desires, and set a bad example of a child who has been all her life taught from the Bible, to another who, perhaps, has learned but little of the lessons it contains? Answer me truly, Rose. Truly, according to what you think."

And Rose was obliged to answer, "No." Then the tears, long restrained, began to flow. "Oh, Miss Elliot dear," she said, "I have been very naughty!"

"Dear child, I am glad you feel it," said Miss Elliot; "that is the first step towards something better. But, Rose," she continued, as the child's tears still flowed, "you know who, if we confess our sins, is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Now I will leave you, and send Isabel to you, that you may have a run in the garden before dinner."





### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CHILDREN'S WALK.

**H**ALF-PAST four o'clock saw the children making their way, hand in hand, through busier streets than those they had traversed with their father in the morning.

"Are we going to see Mary?" asked Rose, as they proceeded.

"Yes."

"Oh," said Rose, dropping her sister's hand, "I wish we weren't, Martha will be so angry!"

"No; papa has spoken to her. He said last night we might go."

"But I don't want to go every day. This is a very ugly walk, and I don't like Mrs. Mason's house; and I shouldn't like at all to see her, if she is so unkind."

"But think of poor Mary, who sees her always, and hardly ever sees any one else. She hasn't any mamma or papa, or brothers or sisters—hardly any one—to love her, so we ought to be kind to her."

"Yes," said Rose, doubtfully; "but I hope we shall not see Mrs. Mason."

"If we did, I should not be afraid," said Isabel. "She would not do us any harm."

"And papa said we might come," Rose put in. Papa's sanction was a great protection, in her mind, against Mrs. Mason.

"Yes; but I am almost sure we shall not see her, for Mary says she always goes out at this hour."

"And there is Mary at the door," said Rose.

A little girl of about Isabel's age, dressed in rather shabby mourning, ran down the steps to meet them. If you had seen her a few minutes before, you would have noticed a sad, almost careworn expression in the blue eyes; but now, no face could look brighter than hers, as she welcomed her two little friends.

"Come in," she said, eagerly, drawing each by a hand. "How kind of you! I have been wishing for you so much, but I hardly hoped to see you again to-day. Come into the back-parlour. I'm all alone, so we can have a nice time. Rose shall look at my big scrap-book." And while Mary ran up-stairs to get it, Isabel took off her hat and spread out her books in the somewhat dingy little room.

"It is rather a difficult bit of French translation, Mary," she said, when her friend returned, "and I



could not remember quite all that Miss Elliot said about the faults I had made ; but perhaps you will understand it better."

"My sum is right," said Mary, with some exultation, looking into Isabel's sum-book ; "and I was afraid it would be all wrong, for I was so sleepy this morning when I did it. I hadn't a minute for it all yesterday evening, and I knew I should have no time to-day ; for what do you think ? Mrs. Mason brought in a great box-full of pocket-handkerchiefs yesterday, and she says I am to hem six every day."

"Six !" repeated Isabel ; "and how soon will they be done ?"

"Oh, I don't know ; never, I suppose," said Mary, with a disconsolate look.

"But she can't go on wanting new pocket-handkerchiefs for ever."

"They're not for her. She will take them to a shop when they are hemmed, and get paid for them."

"Did she tell you so ?"

"Yes ; and for that reason they must be done very well ; better than ever I worked before in my life. Last night I had to rip two whole sides, because some of the stitches were not even ; and oh, my eyes *did* ache ! I wished pocket-handkerchiefs had never been invented."

"Poor Mary! I am so sorry," said Isabel.

"No; you ought not to be sorry for me. I was very naughty, but then I am so foolish. I had never thought, till Mrs. Mason spoke about it yesterday, who was to buy everything I wanted, nor where the money was to come from. Before," said Mary, looking down at her black dress, "papa used to write every now and then, and send money to Mrs. Mason; but now she says that unless I am very useful, and hem lots of handkerchiefs, and help a great deal in the house and with the children, she'll not be able to keep me."

"I wish she wouldn't," said Isabel, with more than usual animation; "I wish she wouldn't keep you, because then papa could have you."

"No, he couldn't," replied Mary, shaking her head with great resolution. She had learned something since the evening before; she was beginning to take a different and a very real view of life and its duties.

"Why couldn't he?" asked Isabel, much astonished at her father's being pronounced by Mary incapable of doing anything he might see fit.

"I am sure he couldn't," repeated Mary; "and I am not wishing for that. I do not want to be idle. It is very good of Mrs. Mason to keep me, and I wish I could feel as if I loved her more; but,

at any rate, I want to try and do all for her that I can. And, Isabel dear, I think I had better not try to do any more lessons, or, at least, not to do the same as you do at school. I haven't time really, and then I am hurried, and it makes me cross. Do you know, yesterday I would not tie a sash for Fanny's doll because I was at my French; and last night Mrs. Mason sent me to bed because, she said, I was so shabby she couldn't bear to see me. And my frock is rather old," said Mary, surveying her worn garment. "I have had it six weeks, and it was not nearly new when I put it on. I felt angry when Mrs. Mason called me a dirty fright; but presently, when I got better, I remembered that I need not have looked quite so bad, if I had brushed my frock and darned the place Johnny tore, instead of only sewing it together."

"Then you won't do any more lessons?" asked Isabel.

"No; I think I ought not; or, at least, not to try to do the same as you do."

"But then," said Isabel, with a face of disappointment, "can't I come to see you any more?"

"Oh yes, when you may," said Mary; "I shall be so glad. When I see you, I forget all the troublesome things—Mrs. Mason, and Fanny, and Johnny, and the pocket-handkerchiefs—and I only remember

the things that my own papa and Miss Elliot used to teach me ; but when I lose sight of those things I feel so miserable, as if I couldn't have patience any longer."

"Do you often feel so?" asked Isabel. It was hard for her, surrounded as she was with love, and gently led as she had been in the way of peace, to enter into Mary's feelings, and she asked the question almost with awe.

"Not often. The Lord Jesus does not allow the good things to go away for long. Whenever I feel worst, some sweet words are sure to come into my mind. This morning it was, 'For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come;' and yesterday, 'Lo, I am with you alway.'"

"I dare say your plan is best," said Isabel, consideringly ; "but I wish I could have gone on helping you, or, at least, that I could do something for you now."

"You do," interrupted Mary, earnestly ; "you make me so happy."

"That isn't what I want ; I want to do something real."

"It is real," said Mary, vehemently.

"I have a plan !" exclaimed Isabel, disregarding her assurance. "I could help you with your handkerchiefs."

"Oh no," replied Mary, quickly. "I am sure you ought not to do that. They are very fine, and you have to put in no end of little stitches."

"But I think I could do them, and I am sure I may. Just let me try. Martha says I can work very neatly when I choose. I always do choose, you know, when she wants me to. But that is Martha's way; she always says, 'If you choose.' But I am sure that if my work was not neat, she would not say so, because she is so particular. Now do bring your handkerchiefs," entreated Isabel; and Mary rose to comply.

"Come and look at this picture, Isabel!" exclaimed Rose, from the corner where she had been established with a little table and Mary's scrap-book. "Such a funny picture! Not very pretty. Two fat boys in a wheel-barrow!"

"Poor old wheel-barrow!" said Mary, looking over Rose's shoulder, as she came back with her work. "I can tell you a story about that, Rose."

"Oh, do," said Rose, who was beginning to tire of her solitary corner.

"And I will do a little bit of hemming to show you," said Isabel, possessing herself of Mary's work-box.

"Go on, Mary," said Rose. "Is the story true?"

"Yes; but it's not long. That picture was done

by my grandpapa. It is very old ; a great deal older than I am," said Mary, as if this were an unanswerable proof of antiquity. "Those were grandpapa's two little boys. The little one asleep in the bottom of the wheel-barrow is my papa."

"Is it like him," asked Rose, surveying, with some astonishment, the fat baby face and little round limbs, which were very contrary to her ideas of a papa.

"No," said Mary. "It was done so long ago." But she looked tenderly at the face, until recalled by Rose to her story.

"Who is this other boy with his head in the wheel-barrow?"

"That is papa's brother, who was a year or two older."

"But how came they both in a wheel-barrow?"

"That's just the story I am going to tell," said Mary ; "at least, as well as I can. It is a long time ago since I heard it." And her voice dropped as her thoughts went back to the long ago time that could never come again.

"Once, long ago," she continued, after a moment's silence, "my grandpapa, who drew that picture, you know, was going somewhere, and his two little boys wanted very much to go with him ; but he would not take them because, he said, it was too

far for them, and they would be tired. They were very much disappointed, for they loved their father so much that they could not bear to be away from him for a single day, and my papa, who was very little then, cried a great deal. His brother was very fond of him, and could not bear to see him cry; so he said they would go together after grandpapa, and show him that they were not tired. So they set off to catch their papa, who had ridden away about half an hour before."

"It wasn't good of them to go, when their papa had told them not," said Rose.

"He had only told them that he could not take them, because of their being tired; and they were so little, that they did not think of any other reason for not going, and forgot that on foot they could never catch the horse, and that really they would be much too tired to walk all the distance that he would ride. They walked along, hand in hand, for what seemed to them both a very long way, until the eldest began to expect every moment to catch sight of his father and the horse. 'We shall soon be there,' he kept saying, to coax on his little brother, and to keep up his own spirits, for the road seemed lonely, and the little one began to drag on him very heavily. They walked on and on, until at last the little one let go his brother's hand and

began to cry, and say he could not walk any further. His brother put him to sit on a bank under the hedge, and sat down beside him. He felt almost inclined to cry himself. It was quite in the country, and he could see no one all round."

"Why didn't he go back to his home?"

"It seemed to him that he had come so far that he must be close to his father by that time, and he could not bear to think of going back again over all that road alone. Besides, his little brother cried when he talked of moving. They began to feel hungry, too, for it was late. Papa's brother really did wish then that he had not left home, for he didn't know either how to get back or to go on. While he was looking about, not knowing what he should do, and feeling very forlorn and miserable, he saw a wheel-barrow, and he thought that if he put his brother into it, it would make a kind of carriage, which he could draw along."

"But how tired he would be!" suggested Rose.

"Yes; but he didn't mind that. He thought if he could only draw his brother along the road till they reached their father, he shouldn't mind anything."

"But the wheel-barrow was not his," again objected Rose.

"No; but he did not think of that, because his



papa had a large place in the country, with a great many fields and workmen and wheel-barrows; he had been allowed to play with those wheel-barrows, and so he thought he might take this one. His little brother was quite pleased to have a ride, and my uncle thought they should get on finely. But he found the wheel-barrow very heavy, and when my papa was in it he could scarcely move it. Presently my papa fell asleep; then his brother felt so dull and so tired that he could not help stopping to rest, and he just put his head against the wheel-barrow and fell asleep too: and so grandpapa found them presently when he came back along that road. And he was so glad to find them safe; and he thought they looked so funny, both sleeping in the old wheel-barrow, that he drew this picture for them."

"And was this their book?" asked Rose.

"Yes."

"Is that all the story?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, dear Mary," said Rose, with a kiss.

"Will you tell me another story some day?"

"Yes; I hope so. I know a great many stories about the pictures."

"Did you hear it, Isabel?" said Rose. "I don't think you did, for you've been so busy."

"Oh, I heard," said Isabel. "It was a very funny story. Will my work do, Mary?"

Even Mary could find no fault with Isabel's stitches. They were worthy of the august pocket-handkerchiefs, and did honour to Martha, who, indeed, had spared no pains to herself or her pupils, in her endeavours to instruct them in the one accomplishment of which she was mistress.

"Isabel!" exclaimed Rose, while Mary was still admiring the work, "I do believe it is raining."

"Raining!" repeated her sister.

"Raining!" echoed Mary, with consternation. "Then Mrs. Mason will be coming home, and I have something to do for her first."

"Don't wait for us, then; go away quickly," said Isabel, wishing her good-bye. "And, Rose, we must make haste. We have forgotten the time. I wish it was not raining. What will Martha say?"

"We couldn't help the rain," said Rose.

"No," was all Isabel's reply, for she was bent on haste; and quickly completing her own and Rose's toilet, she took her sister's hand and went out into the wet streets. "What will Martha say?" was a question which recurred very frequently to her mind. Not so Rose; holding Isabel's hand, the quick movement, the sense of bustle, the cheerful plash of the great rain-drops on the thirsty ground,

even her own share in the wetting they gave, contributed to her pleasure. She always did like a shower; and when it was encountered without Martha, and, better still, without an umbrella, so that she could hear the cool drops patter down on her hat, and feel them, from thence, trickle over her face, her enjoyment was unbounded.

"Are we late?" she asked, noticing her sister's hurry.

"Yes."

"Oh dear," was the happy reflection which followed this admission, "then it is nearer the time for papa to be home, and I shall tell him the story Mary told me about the wheel-barrow."

"But you forget, Rose," said Isabel, "that you promised me you would not talk about Mary, nor say anything about our visits to her."

"Then mayn't I tell the story?"

"I wish you would not. It is my secret, you know, and you promised to keep it."

"I did not think of that when I promised," said Rose, in a tone of great regret. Perhaps she hoped and expected that Isabel would relinquish her claim. It was seldom indeed that she expressed herself disappointed in vain, but this secret was Isabel's great pleasure; perhaps it held too large a place in her heart, for she could not resolve to risk its safety in

order to gratify her little sister. She made no reply, trusting, as she knew she might, to Rose's word once given. Conversation, too, was becoming difficult, for the April shower fell more and more heavily; and though they exerted their utmost speed, they were very wet when they reached home.

Martha's face, when she opened the door, was, as Isabel had expected, as clouded as the showery sky.

"You are in a nice state!" was her first indignant remark. "And pray where have you been all this while, running about in the rain till you look like nothing but—nothing but—two ducks in a pond."

"Martha, I am very sorry," said Isabel; "we made great haste as soon as we saw the rain, but it came on so fast."

"Saw the rain!" repeated Martha; "it's been coming on for the last half-hour, Miss Isabel, so just hold your tongue of such excuses, and tell me right out what you've been doing."

"We have not been doing anything particular. Not any harm. Papa knows. I wish you wouldn't ask, Martha."

"Hoity, toity!" exclaimed Martha, incensed beyond measure at this resistance of her authority. "What can possess the child? Wish I wouldn't ask! And who is to ask, if I don't?"

"Papa," was on Isabel's lips, but she restrained herself. "I wish you would not ask, Martha," was again her answer. "I don't want to tell you."

"And that's just why you must tell," responded Martha. "You've been at some mischief, I doubt."

"Mischief!" repeated Isabel, with rising colour, and silencing Rose, who would have spoken. "You have no right to think such things. I'll tell what I have been doing if papa asks."

"Your papa!" exclaimed Martha, very jealous at this allusion to his superior influence. "He hasn't half the worrit with you that I have. But there, you're an ungrateful child, I'll have no more of you. Go away up-stairs and change your wet things."

She led the way with a brisk step and erect head to the children's room, and there worked off her superfluous energy in the thorough performance of the duty in hand. Boots, stockings, dresses, petticoats, all had to be changed; even the pinafores were taken out of their little black oil-skin bag, and, after being vigorously shaken, were hung up "to take the damp out of them."

Rose began to wish they had not been caught in the rain, as she sat lacing her boots by the fast waning light; it was always a duty she disliked, and when, as now, she had lost the tag from her

boot lace, it was almost beyond the little girl's endurance. Perhaps Martha had intended by this energetic shaking not only to take the damp out of the things, but also to take what she called "the spirit" out of her children; if so, she had succeeded, for they were very quite and submissive when at last she allowed them to go down to tea.

It was a very silent meal, and quickly concluded. Rose bethought herself of her lessons, and Isabel went in search of Martha. Something else than the shaking and changing had told her that she had spoken unkindly to her; Isabel knew full well how to appreciate the real care and love that lay hidden behind the hasty manner; she knew, too, that she had not exhibited that "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price."

Isabel was herself of a very resolute nature, otherwise she might have been rebuffed, when she presented herself at the kitchen door, by the sight of Martha's erect attitude, still betokening wounded dignity, and her firm set face.

"What's the matter now?" she said, turning sharply on her little visitor.

"Martha," began Isabel, "I am sorry I spoke so to you just now. I will tell you what we were doing, if you like."

Martha could not appreciate the sacrifice involved in this offer, nor Isabel's relief when it was refused.

"No ; I don't care what you've been doing."

"I'm very sorry, Martha ; won't you forgive me," asked Isabel.

"There, there," said Martha, half relenting, half dignified ; "I don't want to hear any more of it."

"Then you will forgive me ?" asked Isabel, coming nearer.

"Yes, yes ; to be sure."

"And you don't really believe we were doing any harm ?"

"No, no ; to be sure," replied Martha, at last putting aside dignity, and sealing her forgiveness with a kiss. "You're a good enough child when you don't take in your head to be fractious." And with this very doubtful praise Isabel was obliged to be content.

But praise was not what she had sought.





## CHAPTER IV.

### THE FIRST OF JULY.

**M**ANY an April shower succeeded this, and many a bright April sunbeam made the drops it left shine like jewels on the sweet spring leaves. Who does not love to watch the ripening of spring into summer? The gradual dispersing of wintry clouds and spring showers, and the outspreading of the canopy of pure summer blue. The deepening of shade in the cool woods. The brightening of hedge-rows and gardens. The rejoicing of little birds in the branches, and of little children in their shadow beneath.

Even in the town summer gives many sweet tokens of its approach. Crowded streets, anxious toil, and heavy care, cannot shut out the sunbeams; even city gardens will feel their touch, and respond with bright flowers. The anxiously watched rose-bushes in the children's garden blossomed in due season. Rose hailed every sign of approaching summer with double pleasure, for her birthday was



in summer—the second of July; a day so long looked forward to and so long looked back upon, that I fancy its pleasantness must have extended over a large part of the year.

“Papa,” she said, as she gave her father his morning kiss, “do you know what to-day is?”

“The first of July,” said Mr. King.

“And to-morrow?”

“The second, I suppose,” replied her father.

“My birthday!” cried Rose, skipping round him in glee, and coming back for a congratulatory kiss, when she had completed her dance.

“Your birthday!” said Mr. King. “Are you sure?”

“Of course, papa; and so is Isabel. My eighth birthday.”

“What a pity,” said Mr. King, with a look of regret, “that to-morrow is not my birthday. I might have taken a holiday; but, as it is, I suppose you will not consider Isabel and me entitled to that indulgence.”

“Papa! as if I should care for a holiday alone.”

“Martha,” suggested her father, maliciously.

“Martha wouldn’t take a holiday. She said only yesterday, ‘Business is pleasure, if you only had the sense to know it;’ and I am sure she has the sense, so she wouldn’t take any holiday.”

"And have not I the sense?" asked Mr. King.

"Not Martha's sense," said Rose. "But will you really take a holiday, and give us one?"

"I hope so."

"Oh, that will be nice."

"How shall we spend it?" said Mr. King.

"Whatever way you like, papa. Yours is sure to be a nice way."

"I think we ought to spend one of these fine days in the fields. Should you like to carry your dinner in a basket, and eat it under a tree?"

"Like gipsies? That will be nice! Oh dear," exclaimed Rose, executing another dance, "I wish to-morrow was come; and yet," she added, "I am so happy to-day that I wish it would last for ever."

"I am glad to see my little girl happy," said Mr. King, drawing her to him; "but this joy would be a poor thing to last for ever. We know where there are 'pleasures for evermore.' But I have something else to propose, that will interest Isabel too, I think," he added, turning towards her as she entered the room.

"We are to have a holiday to-morrow, and go out all day in the fields, for my birthday," explained Rose. "And what else, papa?"

"Do you think your little friend Mary would be allowed to come with us?"

"O papa!" said Isabel, with a bright flush of pleasure, "I wish she might; she would be so glad."

"You and Rose must go and invite her when you leave school."

"And we must ask Miss Elliot for a holiday," said Rose.

"Yes," said Mr. King; "and you must ask Martha to go and visit her sister who is ill, as we shall be out all day. That is business as well as pleasure, so she will not object."

"We have a great deal to do to-day," said Isabel.

"And more still to-morrow," said Rose.

The breakfast was despatched with good spirits and appetite, and Isabel only waited before starting for school to warn Martha that they should return later, as papa was going to send them on a message.

Mr. King's flower that morning was mignonnette. The roses, their namesake said, were to be kept for the next day.

"Good-bye, good-bye, papa," said Rose, almost dancing on the steps of Laurel House.

"And you will not forget, papa," said Isabel, with a look of mystery, which, if intended to arouse her sister's curiosity, was certainly very successful.

"To-morrow's my birthday," whispered Rose, with more triumph than grammar, as she passed behind Violetta to her place.

"And I have something to tell you—such fun—after lessons; it is too long to say now," was the reply.

"Oh, what is it? Do tell," said Rose. "I can't bear waiting."

But they were late, and there was only time for a whispered request to Miss Elliot before the morning's business began.

"Business is pleasure, if you only had the sense to know it." Rose's whole nature revolted against this maxim of Martha's, especially this morning, when she was so impatient to see the hours pass away and the morrow draw near, and so anxious to hear Violetta's news, and so very much afraid that her nurse would come, as she sometimes did, too early for them to have any talk.

The clock pointed at last to half-past twelve. Miss Elliot had hardly risen from her seat, the signal for a general move, when Rose eagerly seized Violetta's hand and drew her out into the hall.

"Now, dress yourself. Quick! that we may have a little time in the garden before your nurse comes. I want to be in the garden, that Sophy and Fanny may not find us. They will spoil all the fun. Do dress yourself; here's your hat, your jacket, your handkerchief, and—I don't see your gloves. Why don't you dress yourself?" added the little girl, with some impatience.

"I never dress myself," said Violetta, with her odd, composed, doll-like manner.

"Can't you?" said Rose, with some amazement; "I can dress myself."

"But your dress is not like mine," said Violetta, surveying her companion's plain gray alpaca with disdain, and her own lace and flounces with corresponding complacency.

"Yours is pretty," said Rose, venturing to express her long cherished admiration.

Violetta did not *say* Yes, to this, but she looked it. "Why do you wear such a great pinafore?" was her return.

"Martha makes me. She calls a thing like yours a three-cornered make-believe," said Rose, trying to return her friend's cutting remarks. "Yours doesn't keep your dress clean."

"I don't do anything to make mine dirty," replied Violetta, with unmoved complacency. "Mamma says she had rather I should not learn to write, than spot my dresses and stain my fingers with ink; and she won't have me learn much by heart either—it makes the eyes red."

"Mine aren't red," said Rose quickly, lifting hers, clear and dark, with something of defiance to her friend's face.

"No," said Violetta, doubtfully.

"I know they are not." And perhaps Rose might have entered on a quarrel, for her temper was quick, and her vanity too lively not to be easily wounded, but happily she remembered Violetta's news. "I will dress you," she said, with an air of important superiority, guiding Violetta's arms through the sleeves of her jacket, putting on her hat, and then tying the little blue silk handkerchief.

This last was a difficult business, and Rose expended some care on its performance ; but the result she thought lovely, and she could not help surveying Violetta's appearance with renewed pleasure, as having had a hand in completing its charms. Then a sudden impulse, a misgiving, unbearable to Rose's loving little heart, that she had been unkind to her companion, prompted her to throw her arms round Violetta's neck and offer a kiss of peace.

"You haven't told me your news yet," she said, as they went into the garden.

"Papa and mamma are going to Paris."

"And going to take you?" interrupted Rose, with dismay.

"No ; I am to stay at home, and"—with a little of Rosa's animation—"to stay at school all day until half-past four."

"With us ? Oh, I am so glad ! When shall you begin ?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"That's nice. I'm glad it is not to-morrow, because I shall be out, and I want to be with you the first day, and yet I shouldn't like to wait long. I can't bear waiting. What fun we shall have! How long will you stay?"

"A month or six weeks, mamma said; but I think I shall ask her to let me stay longer."

"Oh, do. I do love you so much." And Rose again threw her arms round her little friend's neck; but she was startled from the transport of delight and affection.

"Violetta!—Miss Violetta!—Rose!—Rose, where are you?" called many voices.

"Oh dear!—there's nurse!" exclaimed Violetta, actually startled into an ejaculation. "I heard her calling me," she said, taking Rose's hand and beginning to draw her towards the house.

Before they had gone many steps they met the nurse, awful with rustling black silk and indignation. Rose stood beside Violetta, feeling this new potentate to be nearly as redoubtable as Martha, her supreme authority on all points, and the only person of whom the petted child stood really in awe.

"Who dressed you?" were the nurse's first words.

"Rose," was Violetta's reply, in her meekest little voice.

Nurse gave a contemptuous pull to her jacket, a push to her hat, and then proceeded deliberately to untie the handkerchief over which Rose had expended so much pains, greatly to that young lady's indignation.

"Never you run away from me and hide yourself with *no one*," were nurse's last words, in a tone and with a look of awful warning, as she led her terrified little charge away from the house.







## CHAPTER V.

### ROSE IN THE CHAIR.

“**I**SABEL, you had better take your music-lesson to-day, as you will be out to-morrow,” said Miss Elliot that same afternoon.

Isabel rose from her place with alacrity. She was fond of music, though music, with her, was represented only by such quaint, easily played, and easily understood tunes as had formed the chief of Miss Elliot’s own musical experience.

But an hour spent alone with Miss Elliot would, under any auspices, have been pleasant to her little pupil; and when enjoyed to the tune of “Cherry Ripe,” or “Lovely Night,” it was indeed delightful.

That same hour in the schoolroom, deprived of its ruler’s presence, was by no means so peaceful.

Catherine Clayton, the eldest pupil, had indeed been left in charge, but her charge was such as a cat might have been expected to take of a bird, or a spider of a fly. She certainly assumed authority

over her companions, but it was authority exerted in a wrong direction.

Catherine had no love for study, but she had for power—the power which a school-girl gains by being first among her companion scholars. Had any but Isabel taken the first place for her studies, Catherine would doubtless have exerted her natural abilities, and would have supplanted the unwelcome rival. But the love of power, so natural even to the youngest child, had long been displaced from Isabel's heart, and in its stead had been implanted that subject will that brings such sweet peace and contentment to the soul.

Thus Catherine was well content to leave the hard study and sustained attention, with the laurels it gained, to Isabel—was ever ready to lead the laugh against “continual plodding” and “meek favour-seeking”—while the praise of ready wit and dauntless spirit was offered to herself by the half-dozen silly little girls who composed her circle of admirers.

“Now, children, look sharp!” she exclaimed, in her most peremptory tone, as soon as the door had closed behind Miss Elliot and Isabel. “I'll have no dawdling and no buzzing of dry lessons into my ears for the next hour. Whoever hasn't shut up their books in ten minutes shall get”—and

Catherine concluded with an ominous shake of the head.

"Get what?" asked Sophy Hunter; and all the little girls looked up from their lessons, so carefully marked out and explained by Miss Elliot, to await the answer, some with awe and some with defiance.

"Get? Whatever I choose to give. You'll see, Miss Sophy, when the time comes."

"But, Catherine," in the most piteous tone expostulated her neighbour, a small, timid-looking girl, who sat hopelessly staring at the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," which she couldn't get into her head, and of which she could make no sense—"I can't learn my lessons in ten minutes, and I have a sum to do that won't come right."

"So much the worse for you. Two minutes' grace for the obstinate sum."

"Catherine, I can't—you know I can't," again pleaded the child, with unsteady voice and rising tears. "My poetry is *so* long and *so* difficult, and Miss Elliot left us an hour to prepare our lessons in, and I don't know how to prove my sum."

"Groaning, Grace, as usual," interrupted Catherine with a laugh, pushing aside her lesson books and opening her desk.

Grace silently and hopelessly returned to her les-

sons, and there was a moment's quiet—soon broken, however.

"What are you doing, Katie?" asked one of the children, whose wandering eyes had seen Catherine to be occupied with something very contrary to lessons.

"Making a paper doll. Who shall it be like? As lovely as Violetta, or as pert as Sophy, or as merry as Rose, or as inquisitive as yourself?"

"Oh, make it like me, and give it to me when it is done."

"No, I shan't. You're too ugly. It shall be like—like Rose. See, here are the curls; white, though, instead of black."

"Rose as an old lady," said Sophy; and the little girls, who had forgotten their lessons to gaze at the wonderful doll, began to laugh.

"Are you going to paint it?" inquired the first questioner, who had left her seat and stood, far away from her books, leaning over her idle companion's shoulder.

"Yes."

"Oh, it will be pretty! Do give it to me when it is done!"

"Indeed; you are cool! And why, pray, should I give it to you, you idle child? I shall give it to whoever shuts up her books first."

"I'm ready !" exclaimed Rose, who, requiring less application to master a task than most children, had been able, in the intervals of excitement, to gain some faint idea of one lesson.

"I'll learn it this evening, or to-morrow, or some time," she thought. Perhaps the expectation of to-morrow's happiness had turned away Rose's thoughts from Him who is the Giver of all good things, and "whose eyes behold, whose eyelids try the children of men."

Had she remembered him, had she lifted up her heart in the very feeblest prayer to him, she would not thus have forgotten and cast aside all that she knew to be right—she would not thus have preferred the praise of men to the answer of a good conscience towards God—she would not have become the slave of another girl's foolishness—she would not have been pleased to receive a paper doll as the reward of deceit and idleness, nor have felt her heart elated when Catherine told her that she was a fine spirited little thing, and worth two of her sister.

"Now, children, the time's up," said Catherine, when she had completed and presented her doll.

Not one among all the children had courage to confess that her lessons were not prepared ; they silently, some unwillingly and some gladly, put aside their books, except Grace. She was sorely per-

plexed between fear of Catherine and fear of Miss Elliot; fear, too, very weak, very undefined, but a withholding fear, nevertheless, of doing wrong.

"I don't know my lessons," she pleaded again, more piteously than before. "You know I can't learn so fast."

"How many have you learned?" asked Catherine.

"I am still learning my poetry; I can't understand it."

"What can't you understand?"

"Oh, none of it."

"Here, Rose; come and help Groaning Grace."

Rose—foolish, vain little Rose—was flattered at being chosen from among all the children as Catherine's associate, even in unkindness and mischief, and came over to Grace, taking the book from her with an assumption of superiority very unbecoming from one little girl to another several years her elder.

"Begin now," said Catherine, having installed her foolish little favourite in Miss Elliot's chair, and made Grace stand hopeless and bewildered before her. She herself stood behind, enjoying what she called the fun, and directing Rose's proceeding.

Rose greatly enjoyed her seat of honour and the authority deputed to her by Catherine: apt at imita-

tion, she soon entered into the spirit of her model, and found the easiest method of entrapping and discomfiting her unfortunate pupil.

Grace herself stood undecided and distressed, partly by the consciousness that she was not improving in her lesson, partly that they were making game of her. Her ideas, never very clear, became more and more confused every moment; the little glimmering of knowledge she had obtained seemed to forsake her; she took refuge in silence, not sulky but hopeless, blaming herself and her own stupidity more than anything else. Would not Rose, in the same situation, have felt very differently?—would not her cheek have flushed and her eye brightened with indignation?—would not angry thoughts have filled her mind?—would she have blamed herself for her ignorance? They might laugh at and despise Grace, but at that moment a beauty was upon her which was far off from all of them, even the sweet clothing of humility.

"I do not know my lesson, Catherine," she said at last.

"So I perceive, you little dunce; and I can waste no more time over it. Bring your sum."

"I can do my sum at home this evening, if you would let me learn my lesson now," Grace ventured to say. "Miss Elliot will be sure to ask, when

she comes back, if I know it, and she won't be pleased."

"Won't be pleased!" repeated Catherine, with great disdain; "what if she isn't? It won't kill you, I suppose. 'Miss Elliot won't be pleased!' That's Isabel's answer, whenever one asks her to do anything. But I won't take it from you, so do as you're told; bring your sum."

"I wish Isabel was here," said Grace, half to herself; "she would help me."

At this mention of her sister, Rose's heart smote her. She felt half inclined to come down from her chair of state, and—though such a little girl could not hope to fill Isabel's place of helper to Grace—to help at least by her silence and by refusing to join in Catherine's teasing play.

But affection for Isabel, strong and deep though it lay in Rose's heart, was not enough to preserve her against the present temptation of Catherine's authority and admiration. A look was enough to enlist her once more against Grace, and certainly no grace was shown towards the unfortunate arithmetician. The assistance was given something in this manner:—Rose, still in Miss Elliot's chair, held the slate and pencil; Grace stood before her; Catherine, behind, proposed the questions and commented very freely on the answers.



"Now, Grace, quick. Three from eight?"

"Five," responded Grace, after a moment's thought.

"Three and five?"

But Grace could not so quickly turn her powers from one rule to another, and supposing herself still engaged in subtraction, she replied, "Two."

"Three and five, two!" repeated Catherine, delighted. "Put it down, Rose. Three and five, two!"

"No, wait!" exclaimed Grace, arresting Rose's hand. "Wait, what did you say, Catherine?"

"I shall not repeat every question half a dozen times. Just think what *you* said, and you will know what a dunce you are."

"I said, Three and five, two. Oh! I was thinking of subtraction; wait, it's multiplication; no, addition. Three and five, seven. No, eight I mean, eight."

"At last," said Catherine; "now, fifteen from nine, and be quick."

"Fifteen from nine? fifteen from nine?" repeated Grace, much puzzled. "I don't know, I'm sure. Is that in my sum? why, Catherine," with much hesitation, "I can't take fifteen from nine."

"Really! Can't you? That is a pity," said Catherine. "It is so seldom *you* cannot do anything."

She broke into a laugh, joined by Rose and some of the other children, who had been looking on.

But the laughter was suddenly stopped.

"What are you doing?" said Isabel, who appeared at the door.

She came forward, and, taking her sister's hand, drew her from her unwonted seat. "What are you doing with Rose?" she repeated, in a tone of authority, fixing a pair of bright eyes on Catherine.

"Dear me, we are only amusing ourselves. You needn't fly into a rage, Miss Brimstone," replied Catherine.

"You had no right to"—the quick colour mounted to Isabel's cheeks—"to make Rose play when she ought to have been learning her lessons. And with Grace, too."

Isabel felt really angry. She knew Catherine's propensity for teasing Grace, and knew, too, that Catherine had encouraged Rose in the same pursuit as the surest way of vexing her. Just then she thought more of Catherine's unkindness than of the charity which is not easily provoked.

Rose's hand was still held in her sister's; she hung her head, and began to understand that she had been very naughty indeed, when she saw how angry their play had made her usually gentle sister.

"You are teaching Rose to be like yourself,"

continued Isabel, giving free course to her indignation. "You have been making her idle and unkind and rude."

A gentle hand was laid on her shoulder.

"Isabel," said Miss Elliot's quiet voice of astonishment; "Isabel, what is all this?"

Isabel did not turn round to justify herself or to relate her grievance: the sight of Miss Elliot's face recalled her better self, or rather that in her which was not herself; the sense of Catherine's unkindness and rudeness, and of Rose's naughtiness, was lost in the recognition of her own. A deeper blush of shame overspread her face, and tears began to escape from beneath the drooped eyelids.

"Go away with Rose into the music-room," said Miss Elliot. "I will come to you presently." And Isabel was glad to escape.

"Now, Catherine," said Miss Elliot, who in one quick glance had noticed the disorderly room, the disregarded lesson-books, the group of idle children, Grace's distress, and Catherine's evident confusion—"will you please to explain the reason of all this disorder?"

"I was making Grace say her lessons," replied Catherine, after some hesitation.

"You were doing more than that, I think," said Miss Elliot. "Grace, you may take your books into

my room, and learn your lessons there. And you may take your places at the table," she continued, addressing the other children; "you were all, though perhaps in a less degree, engaged as Catherine was, and what I have to say is to you all. Catherine, will you try now to tell me honestly how you have spent the time since I left the room?"

Catherine tried hard to maintain her character for spirit before her little admirers; she saw Sophy Hunter's eyes fixed on her, as if waiting to see whether she would give in at once to Miss Elliot and make confession of her idleness. Perhaps Miss Elliot saw this too, for while Catherine was seeking an answer which would shield her, and yet would not be actually contrary to the truth, she spoke again. "Remember, Catherine, that what you are going to say is not to me only; these little ones round will hear your answer, and it remains with you to set them an example of courage and honesty. Above all, One is listening who cannot be deceived, from whom nothing is hid."

Miss Elliot was a person of few words, and she said no more. There was silence again for some moments and when Catherine spoke, her words were hardly an answer to Miss Elliot's question.

"Grace is so stupid, so foolish," she said.

"And what else is she? can you not say, also,

Grace is so gentle, so humble? Indeed, Catherine, I wish I could see you more like her."

Like Grace! She to be compared to Grace! The idea was preposterous; Catherine gave a contemptuous toss of her head.

"Yes, indeed," proceeded Miss Elliot, noticing this movement, "I do wish that you were like Grace, not even excepting what you call her foolishness. Do not misunderstand me; I do not wish that you should be incapable of fulfilling the duties required of you, but I do earnestly desire that you may take the place of weakness, that you may all be among the number of those blessed ones who are mentioned in the first chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Get your Bibles, and turn to the twenty-seventh verse. Read it aloud, each of you."

So five times these words were read, and Catherine, though she tried to shake off the remembrance, could not forget them:—

"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

Miss Elliot thought that this word of God needed

no comment from her, and she made none ; but she silently prayed God to bring it home to each of their hearts, and then she rose from her seat. "It is half-past four," she said. "You may put away the books and go home."

Isabel had dried her tears to comfort Rose, who now desired nothing less than to be Catherine's favourite. Miss Elliot, when she re-entered the music-room, saw that the half-hour's quiet had not been wasted on the sisters, and, after a few words, she permitted Rose to go in search of Grace, and, according to her own earnest desire, tell her she was sorry for her past unkindness.

Grace, who, in the quiet of Miss Elliot's room, had triumphantly surmounted the difficulties of five (which Catherine had changed to fifteen) from nine, hardly perceived or remembered that any injury had been done her by the little girl, and readily gave the desired kiss of forgiveness. Thus Catherine's reign was disturbed in Rose's heart.





## CHAPTER VI.

### THE REWARD OF VALOUR.

**A**LL traces of that afternoon's storm at Laurel House had passed away from Isabel as she entered Mrs. Mason's little back-parlour. Dark indeed must have been the cloud which could long cast a shadow over her usually calm face, or chase the happy smile of peace and contentment from her lips. Now the sight of Mary recalled her pleasant errand to her mind, and smiling quite won the day.

"Let me tell," whispered Rose, as they opened the door; and Isabel of course acknowledged her sister's right to this privilege.

"Mary, Mary," cried Rose, hardly waiting to say, "How do you do,"—"Guess what I am going to tell you."

Mary's cheeks flushed. "Something pleasant?" she asked, doubtfully; surprises generally, with her, had brought disappointment and grief.

"Oh yes; something very pleasant. Can't you

see how glad I am? And you must be glad too, for it's something delightful. Isabel, you mustn't tell."

"Something for you, too," said Isabel.

"For me!" repeated Mary, in the utmost astonishment; "something delightful for me," she repeated. It was hard indeed to guess what it could be, delights were so scarce in her life—indeed, had almost gone out of it since those rare delights, her father's letters, had ceased. But Rose expected her to guess, and she herself was not a little anxious to discover what this pleasant secret might be. Many possible and un hoped-for pleasures passed through her mind. Rose would have scorned them as being quite unworthy of the illustrious truth; for going back to school, a half-hour's walk, no more pocket-handkerchiefs, were the brightest among them.

"She will never guess—you must tell her," said Isabel at last, compassionating her friend's suspense.

"Well, then," said Rose, "do you give up?"

"Yes," was the ready answer.

"To-morrow will be my birth-day, and we are to have a holiday, and papa is going to take a holiday too, and we are to spend the day in the fields, and"—Rose paused, to give a due increase of importance to this last clause—"and you are coming with us; at least, if you may."



Mary did not receive this announcement with the expected tokens of delight ; she remained silent, and the expression of pleased surprise gave place to one of disappointment.

“ Mary, what is the matter ? ” asked Isabel.

“ Aren’t you glad ? don’t you want to come ? I thought you would be glad,” exclaimed Rose, pulling her hand to attract her attention.

“ I cannot come,” said Mary, at last.

“ Why not ? ” asked both the little girls at once.

“ I cannot. I am sure Mrs. Mason would not let me, and—and I should not like to ask her.”

This reply, which recalled Mrs. Mason in all her terrors, silenced both Rose and Isabel for a few moments. In their happiness they had, until now, almost forgotten this arbiter of Mary’s destiny.

Isabel spoke at last. “ Would you like to come, Mary ? ”

“ Oh, so much ! I should like to be with you, and in the fields.” Mary’s eyes filled with tears. “ But I cannot go, I am sure ; I wish I had never thought about it, for I shall feel so unhappy now, not to be able to go with you.”

“ Tiresome Mrs. Mason ! ” exclaimed Rose, in extreme indignation. “ I wish she was shut up herself. I wish she had all those handkerchiefs to hem. I wish ”—

"Hush," said Isabel and Mary together.

"She has spoilt my birth-day," said Rose.

"We have not asked her yet," said Isabel. "Are you afraid to ask, Mary?"

"Yes; and I am sure she would not let me, if I did. I am not exactly afraid, but I can't bear to speak to her; she says such things. We had better go back to the work and think no more of it."

"I will ask," said Isabel.

"You," exclaimed both Rose and Mary.

"Yes. If you do not like to ask, I will. You shall not give up your holiday without at least trying for it. We should be so sorry not to have you; it would spoil Rose's birth-day."

"But will you like to ask Mrs. Mason?" said Mary.

"I shall not like it, but I would rather than not have you. And we shall not do anything which could make her really angry. Papa has told us to ask; he wishes you so much to come."

"He is very kind," said Mary. "I wish I were as brave as you are."

"Let us try, now, how much work we can get done," said Isabel. "I will wait till Mrs. Mason comes home; I dare say she will be kinder than you think. Things are not generally half as bad as they seem beforehand. Rose, here is your book."

It was the lesson which Rose had neglected to learn, and while she sat down to fulfil this duty, Isabel took her work, and had already put in two or three of the "very small stitches," before Mary's mind had come slowly back from regrets that she was not as brave as Isabel.

Many and many a day had these two little girls sat, as now, over their work,—Isabel learning something of what is meant by bearing one another's burdens; Mary warming and expanding under the influence of love to which she was so little accustomed, and for want of which her heart seemed often well-nigh starved. She had given up trying to learn Isabel's lessons; she was learning instead to accept her place just as God had prepared it for her; and even her childish experience could be expressed in the words of the sweet Psalmist, "Oh, taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

Mrs. Mason hardly guessed, when she gave the daily task, what a daily delight she provided for her little workwoman. She would have found it hard, in the midst of her pleasure-taking, to raise a song of such unmixed joy as now was poured forth by the two children. The singing might be weak and simple indeed, but it was true and clear, and it came straight from the hearts of the little singers:—

"More lovely far than we had thought,  
Is he by whom our souls are taught.  
More grace and goodness from him flow,  
Than any at a distance know.

"He loves his little ones to teach,  
And put his truth within their reach;  
And not the weakest e'er can say,  
I came, but I was sent away."

The work, meanwhile, was not neglected—fast and sure the needles flew along the hems. Rose was becoming tired of waiting for her sister, when a knock was heard at the door.

"Mrs. Mason!" exclaimed Mary, dropping her work. "I know her knock. I must open the door."

Isabel had almost forgotten her promise. She felt a little tremor at the idea of meeting this awful and unknown personage, but no confusion was expressed in her manner, as she folded her work, and picked up Mary's, and then put on her hat.

She had just accomplished this, when Mary returned from opening the door. She had only summoned sufficient courage to mumble something about somebody waiting to see Mrs. Mason in the back-parlour, and that lady stopped when she entered, and looked at the two little girls in some amazement.

"I am Isabel King," said Isabel at last, as the first necessary step towards accomplishing her object.

Mrs. Mason's look of astonishment changed at once to one of delighted politeness.

"Mr. King's little girls, I declare! Indeed, I'm very glad to see you; but pray sit down. I ought to have known you, I'm sure, for I have often noticed you, and your dear little sister's fine eyes, and such pretty curls. I'm sure I wish my Fanny had such curls," and Mrs. Mason drew her little girl forward.

Isabel profited by the moment's silence this movement imposed. "Papa sent me to ask," she said, "whether you would be so kind as to allow Mary to spend to-morrow with us?"

"Mary?" repeated Mrs. Mason in renewed wonder. "The idea of *that* child's being asked!" she said to herself, but she kept the smile on her face; and Isabel continued,—

"It is my sister's birth-day, and papa would be much obliged if you would let Mary come as early in the morning as possible; before breakfast, if you please—papa will bring her home in the evening."

"My dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Mason, for Isabel's quiet persistence in this startling proposal actually took away her breath—"my dear, I must see about it. Do you want Mary?"

"Yes, if you please," said Isabel, wondering how

many assurances would be required to convince Mrs. Mason of this, to her, most natural fact.

Then Mrs. Mason, for the first time, seemed to take it in, and began to frame a suitable answer.

"Really, Miss King, your papa is very kind, I'm sure, but I hardly know what to say. Mary never goes out."

"But do let her come to us this once," said Isabel.

"If she were like you now," said Mrs. Mason consideringly, "such a good little girl, I'm sure. But I know what she is: her head will be turned if she goes out."

"Oh no," said Isabel; "we shall be very quiet, and we shall be so much obliged if you will give her leave to come. Will you?"

Mrs. Mason could not resist Isabel's smile and persuasive tone. She had all along felt that she could not refuse Mr. King's little girls; to refuse Mary was, in her eyes, quite a different thing. "Well, I'm sure you're very kind," she said. "If you really wish for Mary, I shouldn't like to disappoint you, Miss King, and your dear little sister. For her birth-day too. What is your name? if I may ask, my dear."

"Rose," said the child.

"A charming name, I'm sure."

"And will you let Mary come?" asked Rose,

beginning to think that Mary's fears of this very amiable Mrs. Mason were uncalled-for.

"Little dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Mason, referring not to Mary, but to Rose. "Indeed I can't refuse you. Mary shall come if she's a good girl, and if the weather's fine."

This permission, though not the most gracious, was received with delight by the three children; and Mary, when she conducted Isabel to the door, paid some of her debt of gratitude with a very tight hug and kiss.

"Did I not tell you," said Isabel, when she wished her good-bye, "that things are not generally so bad as they seem beforehand?"

Mrs. Mason lost no time in sending Mary back to her work, with a sharp reprimand for past idleness, and a warning, that if she were not more industrious for the remainder of the evening, her friends, the next day, "might sing for her."

Mary was cheered by the prospect of unhopèd-for pleasure, and instead, as was sometimes the case, of being discouraged by Mrs. Mason's sharpness, she stitched away bravely, determined that if her friends sang, it should be *with* and not *for* her.





## CHAPTER VII.

### A ROSY DAWN.

**M**ARY'S thoughts, when she laid her head on the pillow that evening, were very bright. Fortunately, Mrs. Mason had taken such good care to make her use her utmost efforts to redeem lost time, that she was thoroughly tired, and soon forgot pleasure and expectation in a sound sleep.

There was neither blind nor curtain to her window, and sometimes, on a stormy night, when the wind shook the casement and the rain pattered hard and cold on the panes, she thought this very cheerless, and would recall, with longing, a warm, carpeted room and snug little white-curtained bed which had once been hers. Then would come a thought of the dear face which had smiled as a strong yet gentle hand drew those curtains close, that wind and cold might not harm her; this often brought a yearning desire for one more look at that far-away face, and



many a time drops, which rain had not brought, fell upon her cheek ere sleep fell upon her eyes.

It was no sound of rain-drops that awakened her to-day ; rays of bright morning sunshine fell softly across her bed, and at last, reaching her face, lifted her eyelids as if by magic. The sense of happiness returned before her other senses were aroused, and for some moments she sat on the bed trying to remember the cause of this delightful and unwonted feeling.

"Oh, I know!" she exclaimed at last. Then, springing from her bed, she ran across the room, and opening the window, looked out into the rosy morning mist.

There were no mountains to reflect its delicate tints on snowy summits ; no forests to rise, with mysterious grandeur, in its shadowy light ; no clear running brooks to drink its golden beams and send them forth, in perfumed clouds, to refresh expectant flowers. The light only fell on houses, with sleepily-closed shutters ; on two or three foot-passengers, perhaps too busy or too sad to notice its kindly warmth ; on a few chimneys, enviously trying to eclipse its glory in smoke ; and on the happy little face looking out from the attic window.

"It is fine," said its owner, taking a long breath of the sweet summer air. Then she performed her

toilet with unusual care and energy. It was very successful for some time; the blue eyes looked bright, and the often pale cheeks rosy, with pleasant excitement; the fair hair, naturally soft and smooth, lay in shining plaits; but when it came to the dress, Mary's countenance fell.

Certainly the old black frock looked far from suitable to a festive occasion. Mary held it up to the light and surveyed its many defects. The result almost made her wish she were not going; but another look at the bright sky brought her to a wiser frame of mind. She brushed with a good will; and when the unwonted ornament of a cambric frill round the neck and sleeves was added, she hoped it might not look so bad after all.

Fortunately, her going out was of such rare occurrence that the hat and gloves, though of the very plainest and cheapest description, were in better condition. When she came to the old black jacket, a great deal too thick and heavy for the season, another fit of regret seized her; but she bravely thrust her arms into the sleeves, and buttoned it without a second look or thought. Then she took a little silk purse from one corner of the box which contained her small wardrobe. This purse had long held a sixpence, which Mary now took from its hiding-place, and then sat for a minute, gravely

considering what sixpence could buy as a birth-day present for Rose.

This was a hard question, so waiving its decision, she at last put the purse into her pocket ; and then, opening the door, went softly down the stairs. No one seemed to be astir ; the front door was locked, but as it was Mary's daily business to unfasten it, this was no difficulty, and she soon found herself in the street. For a moment she stopped to realize the sense of freedom and peace, and then she went slowly down the road, pondering on the many possible ways of employing a sixpence.

Rose, meanwhile, lay dreaming. She dreamed that she and Isabel were walking hand in hand through a meadow ; they felt tired at last, and sat down to rest in the shade of a great tree ; for a time the great tree waved its branches gently above their heads, but afterwards it grew stiff and still, and gradually changed to the tall, straight figure of Martha, dressed in one of the cotton gowns which Rose had often thought must have been woven expressly for her, as none such were to be seen elsewhere. The cotton gown in her dream, however, was rendered still more striking and ugly by being of a violent green, perhaps from its tree origin. Martha's voice called loudly on her to leave the meadow, and Isabel led her away to another, where trees and Marthas were

not ; but in their place were myriads of flowers, so beautiful and so fragrant that the pleasant perfume awoke her, and she saw Martha at the foot of the bed calling her, and Isabel at her side holding a bunch of flowers, perhaps not so rare, but fresh and sweet-scented as those of her dream.

"Flowers !" she exclaimed ; "then I was not dreaming. Are they for me ? How sweet !"

"They are for your birth-day, and I wish you many happy returns of the day," said Isabel, bestowing many kisses on the rosy face, and laying a little wax doll in her sister's arms.

"For me too !" exclaimed Rose, looking with a mixture of wonder and pleasure into her sister's equally happy face. "This doll for me ? Oh, thank you ; how pretty she is ! And," with fresh delight, "isn't she like Violetta ? Just like Violetta, if her eyes weren't quite so blue, and if her hair was all up and down instead of in curls, and if her cheeks weren't *quite* so rosy. But she is a dear baby, and I think I shall call her Violetta ; if you don't mind my not calling her after you."

"Oh no, call her Violetta. It is a very pretty name, and the doll is more like her than like me."

"Come, now," said Martha, as soon as she could find an opportunity of speaking, "get up, and make haste, or it will be bed-time before you are dressed.

And, Miss Isabel, give me that nosegay. Flowers in a bedroom are poison, and they shan't stop in any that I have to do with."

"Oh, take care of them, please," exclaimed Rose, as Martha, with no very gentle hand, seized and prepared to carry them out of the room. "Put them where I can get them again."

"They're close outside, in water," said Martha, returning. "Here's something for your birth-day, and may you live long enough to make good use of it."

As she spoke, she presented a housewife of lemon-coloured silk, brocaded with large lilac flowers, and well filled with cotton and needles of all sizes.

"Thank you, Martha," said Rose, hardly appreciating the merits of the gift. "This is a thing like yours. It's very pretty."

"It's not only pretty, it's useful," said Martha; "and that's better, to my thinking. I hope you'll grow up to make a good use of it, and use away all the needles."

"All those!" repeated Rose, with some awe. Sewing was not yet so attractive to her that she could echo the wish.

"Yes indeed, and more too. I could mend and make every stitch I put on before I was Miss Isabel's age."

Rose mentally congratulated her sister on not

being like Martha in this respect, but she said no more, and Martha favoured her with several choice bits of advice, specially reserved for her birth-day, while she superintended her toilet.

Mary walked slowly along the sunny streets. It was still early ; few of the shops were opened, and these hardly yet displayed their choicest wares. No appropriate destination could be found for the sixpence. The green-grocer's, the only shop then in its prime, attracted her attention, and she stood before it for a few minutes. The summer vegetables, indeed, looked their freshest, but they could hardly be offered as birth-day gifts ; there were a few bunches of flowers, but to Mary's mind these were not choice enough for the occasion. The green-grocer's could not help her. She walked a little further. A bookseller's shop was her next stopping-place ; rows of gaily-bound, gilded volumes were being placed in the window. Mary looked at them, and thought how glad she should be to have one of them for Rose ; but her sixpence could do little towards accomplishing this wish, and she presently walked away. She had almost given up the search in despair, when her eye was caught by a 6d. printed very large on a white card ; she quickly crossed the street to see what was to be sold at this convenient price.

Dolls. Not very large, but, in Mary's unaccustomed eyes, the perfection of waxen babyhood. Tiny, delicate features; soft, shining hair; bright, clear eyes; pink and white complexions; what more could be desired for a guinea? and these might be had for the sixpence. Its owner stood, not for a moment in doubt of the advisability of purchasing, but transfixed with wonder and admiration by this delightful termination of her difficulties. A voice at her side aroused her; a weak, trembling voice, that told of want and sorrow more surely than did the words it spoke.

"A penny to buy bread," it said; "bread for the child, ma'am. Have you a penny?"

Mary turned and saw a woman, thin and blue, dressed in very scanty and worn garments; a little child hung by her hand, almost too weak to support itself, too listless to take interest in the request and its answer.

"I haven't a penny," was Mary's first thought.

It was so rare for her to possess any money that she was surprised at a beggar's even expecting anything from her.

"I haven't," she began; but then she remembered her sixpence.

She stopped short.

"We've had nothing to eat since yesterday, noon, and been walking half the night."

Should Mary give her sixpence? all the money she had in the world. The woman and the child both looked very cold and hungry; perhaps they wanted her money more than she did. Mary felt for her purse, and half took it out of her pocket. As she turned her head, her eyes fell again on the dolls. Could she give them up? They looked more lovely than ever. Could she meet Rose empty-handed, when she had so counted on the pleasure of carrying her a gift?

For a moment she was sorely tempted. She said to herself that it seemed hard she should not have this innocent gratification, when her pleasures were so few. But could she refuse the poor woman, when she held what would help her in her hand?

The weak voice sounded again.

"A bit of bread for the child; he's very hungry. Kind lady, be good enough, if you please. Give us a penny to buy a morsel of food. He hasn't no one but me."

Mary turned again from the dolls and looked at the child and his protector. They looked very frail, those two, clinging together in their helpless want and weakness.



"He hasn't no one but me," repeated the woman. "His father was drowned."

Where was Mary's father? What covered the dear face she so often beheld in her dreams? Where lay the still heart over whose lost treasure of love she so often wept yearning tears? Was it not with the child's father? Were not both in the same vast grave? Did not the same waves roll over each? Would not the same sea one day give up each? And, meanwhile, did not the same God, the God of the fatherless, watch over each of the orphans who were left? Could she turn away from her brother in distress? The weak woman's voice was no longer heard. The words spoken in her heart were words of God: "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" The love of God! How that thought lifted her above temptation! how it inflamed her heart with desire to relieve the distress she saw! how it enlarged her sympathies to make the child's sorrows her own!

Very simply, and without speaking, she took the sixpence from her purse and laid it in the woman's outstretched hand. It was no effort now. "All things come of Thee, and of thine own have we given Thee," were the words of her heart.

Solemnized, quieted, but exceedingly happy, she turned, without hearing the woman's thanks, and walked towards Mr. King's house.

Isabel and Rose were waiting for her at the garden gate; they received her with warm congratulations and welcomes, and Mary's kiss and good wishes for the little birth-day queen were none the less ready that they were her only offering.

A moment's painful recollection of the old black frock's many defects came upon her when her two little friends, fresh from Martha's careful supervision, appeared before her in their white dresses and pinafores, perfectly plain but also perfectly spotless; but in Isabel's eyes the black dress was a charming sight, and very heartily welcomed for the wearer's sake.

Mr. King came into the garden to meet his little visitor, and led her himself, with many kind words, into the parlour, where breakfast was spread. Mary had no time to feel shy, happiness so crowded upon her: the breakfast, too, was no sinecure; her early walk had made her hungry, and Martha's dainty bread and butter and eggs were done full justice to.

Except for this very substantial element in the morning's enjoyment, it might all have seemed a dream, so bright a contrast was it to her usual life. The cheerful room, the neatly spread table, the gentle

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voices, the happy faces, and, above all, the atmosphere of love which reigned around her.

"Oh, we *are* happy!" said Rose at last, giving words to the feeling which almost oppressed her guest.

"Is my little girl enjoying her birth-day?" said Mr. King.

"Oh, so much, papa! And to think that it is only just beginning, and we have so much more to do. Won't the fields be sweet to-day, papa?"

"Yes; I hope so."

"Oh, I am sure! Aren't you, papa? I don't think there could be better fields than ours anywhere; the grass couldn't be greener, and then they are covered with daisies, and there are other flowers in the hedges, and in one field there is a tree. Don't *you* think they are sweet, papa?"

"Yes. Some people wouldn't call them sweet at all," said Mr. King, smiling at his little girl's boast of the one tree; "but old city-folk, like you and I, think them beautiful. Which do you think are the wisest?"

"We, papa, of course, because then we enjoy ourselves in them. But who are the people who wouldn't like our fields?"

"People who live quite in the country."

"What is the country like, then, miles and miles away?"

"A little like our fields, only greener, and with hills, and valleys, and pretty cottages, and hundreds of trees instead of one."

"It's better," said Rose, after a moment's grave consideration. "It's better, yes, because God made it. Martha says, 'God made the country, and man made the town.' Why don't you live in the country, papa?"

"I cannot explain that now," said Mr. King. "I think you have not understood Martha's words. Do you think that when you live in the town you see nothing God has made?"

"God made all the world," said Rose, consideringly. "But we see more of the things he has made in the country."

"I think not," said Mr. King. "The most precious things that God has made are chiefly to be found in towns. My little girl—if God spares her life—will have to spend many years of it in the town; but I should not like her to feel herself, for that reason, at all shut out from the works of God. Try and find out what the things are which God has made—those most precious things—which may be seen in crowded streets."

Rose looked at Isabel, usually her first impulse in moments of difficulty. Her sister was smiling.

"Do you know?" asked Rose.

"I think I do. You try and find out."

"The flowers?" suggested Rose, after some hesitation; "but we cannot see them in the streets—at least, not many in the crowded streets. Did you mean flowers, papa?"

"No."

"Nor the fruit and vegetables in the shops? Oh, I know! The stones that build the houses. God made those, and they are in every street. The stones, papa?"

"Try again," said Mr. King. "Something more precious than the stones; something, one of which has cost more to buy than all the rest of the world put together."

"Is it here, papa?"

"Yes."

Rose looked round the room. "I see nothing here that cost so very much, papa. The clock on the mantle-piece cost a great deal, Martha said, but not so much as that. I see nothing so precious here, except—Is it us?" she said at last.

"Yes. Are not we more precious than all things else? What is the price we have cost?"

Rose considered again, and then answered in the words of the Bible,—

"'The precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.'"

“ ‘The precious blood of Christ,’ ” repeated Mr. King. “So, when you hear any one say, God made the country and man made the town, you must remember that everywhere and in everything God’s work may be seen. To-day, however, we mean to enjoy as much of the country as we can, so if you will find the Bibles, we will read and then go out.”

That was indeed a season of refreshing. Pleasant indeed was it to the solitary orphan to be thus, even for a day, “set in a family,” and with them to praise the God of all grace. The hymn was simple and suited to the capacity of the youngest among them ; but the words were rich with the truth of Christ, and every heaven-taught soul could make them its own :—

“ Jesus the Lord is full of love,  
How mild are all his ways !  
He hears his children’s prayers above,  
And loves their notes of praise.

“ Through life he guides them by his Word,  
And, if they come to die,  
Loosens the little silver cord  
And lets the spirit fly.

“ Thus from the gloomy world they rise,  
To Jesus borne along,  
And then above the starry skies  
They join the heavenly throng.

“There they behold the Saviour’s face,  
The Lamb who died for them,  
And sing the wonders of his grace  
Who did their souls redeem.

“And there they dwell for evermore  
Before Immanuel’s throne,  
And love, and worship, and adore  
The holy Three in One.”





## CHAPTER VIII.

### NELLY.

**T**HE baskets were packed, the last preparations made, and, a little before eleven, they left the house. The streets had a new aspect in the children's eyes that morning. Rose looked at every passer-by, pitying those who were bound for the city, and wondering if any of those who were walking her way felt as happy as herself. After about half-an-hour's walking, they left the road and really entered the fields; they crossed two or three, and then reached their destination. It was a field too, but it boasted what the others could not—a wide-spreading elm-tree, and a little clear-running brook.

"I think this is the best place to stop," said Mr. King, putting down his basket and seating himself in the shade of the tree.

The children followed his example.

When she cast her eyes around, Isabel could not help remembering with wonder those people of whom



her papa had spoken, who would despise their fields. To her, they were so pleasant that all her thoughts seemed one song of praise while she looked.

White and gold—richly scattered over the fresh, green grass—shone the daisies ; little scarlet pimpernels spoke cheerily of fair weather ; long garlands of convolvulus twined about the hedges ; bright corn-flowers peeped from among the pale yellow corn that waved slowly in the summer breeze ; that same touch fluttered the little leaves musically above her head ; higher yet was the calm summer sky, so bright, yet so deep. Isabel felt as if she could sit gazing for ever, but Rose soon wanted to gather the flowers.

“ We must make you a wreath,” said Isabel, rising.

“ Of daisies,” said Rose ; “ here are plenty.”

“ Here is a wreath ready-made,” said Mary, and she drew one of tiny white and pink convolvulus from the hedge.

“ That is lovely,” said Isabel. “ I wish she could wear it in her hair.”

“ So I can,” said Rose, quickly pulling off her hat.

“ No,” said Isabel. “ Martha said to me, the last thing before we came out, ‘ Whatever you do, don’t take off your hats in the sun.’ ”

“ I wish she hadn’t said that ; but she always remembers everything that’s tiresome,” said Rose.

"The wreath will look very well round your hat," said Mary, beginning to twine it among the white ribbons.

"How well you have arranged it, Mary," said Isabel, admiringly ; "she looks quite like the queen."

"I wish I could see," said Rose.

"Come and look at yourself in the brook, like the stag in the fable," said Isabel.

Rose ran to the stream ; but although the water was clear, she could not succeed in obtaining a view of anything but a broad-looking, shadowy little girl, whose head seemed very unsteady on her shoulders.

Mary and Isabel laughed at the strange caricature, and decided Rose, who had felt much disappointed, on following their example.

"What are you looking at?" called Mr. King, who heard the sounds of merriment.

"At me, papa," replied Rose. "Come and see ; I look so funny. But, papa, I wanted to see myself really," she continued, turning away from the water when she had exhibited herself to her father.

"You must wait till you get home, I am afraid," said Mr. King. "It is a pity you did not bring a looking-glass. But what is the reason of this sudden anxiety to examine yourself? Are you afraid you have lost one of your features by the way? I assure you your nose and eyes are quite safe, and your

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mouth too, I hope, for it will soon be dinner-time."

"Papa, papa," cried Rose, "that's not what I want. Don't you see, Mary has put a wreath round my hat, and I want to know how it looks."

"That is difficult," said Mr. King, "without any kind of looking-glass. I think all you can do is to make mirrors of Mary and Isabel."

"How, papa? How can I do that, Isabel?"

"Papa means that we must each wear a wreath, and then you will see how yours looks."

"To be sure," exclaimed Rose; "and then we shall look like *three* queens."

She ran to the hedge, and from that luxuriant treasure-house soon produced two more of the ready-made wreaths. Mary and Isabel then sat down on the grass and submitted themselves to her hands, and Rose only refrained from pronouncing her mirrors lovely from a fear lest she should be supposed vain enough to extend this opinion to herself.

"I feel quite unworthy of such royal company," said Mr. King. "What can I do to amuse the queens?"

"Oh, play with us, papa," entreated Rose.

"At what?" said Mr. King. "Catching? Off with you, miss. I shall have you in a minute."

"Isabel—Mary—run, run!" cried Rose, as she

sped across the sunny field, with her two companions a little behind, and Mr. King in full chase of them all.

"Oh, it is too hot for running," gasped Isabel, as she fell at last, a panting captive, into her father's arms.

"I think it is," said Mr. King. "We must devise some other amusement."

"Hide-and-seek," suggested Rose; "that is not hot. We can walk quite quietly, and hide in the shade."

"Is my little girl a fairy, to creep into a buttercup or hide herself under a tuft of grass?" said Mr. King.

"There is nothing large enough to hide us here," said Mary; "but we can hide something else."

"One of our little baskets," said Isabel.

"That will do; won't it, papa? And who shall hide first?"

The beseeching look of Rose's eyes, as she put this question, prompted Mr. King to suggest her as the first hider; and she, after a little polite hesitation, accepted the favour.

It was not, by many, the first game of hide-and-seek that Rose had played. She was a very cunning hider. "They will be sure to look under the hedge and near the brook," she said to herself, as, with

the basket in her hand, she surveyed the field. "I'll try and hide it among some of the long grass, near the footpath. What a hunt they will have!"

She knelt down beside the most promising tuft of grass, and proceeded to bury her basket. As she was pulling some more grass to cover a bit of the handle that would peep out, she espied something shining on the ground. She picked it up, and saw a small, worn purse. The fastening was very rusty; but she managed to undo it, and out fell into her hands what seemed to Rose a countless supply of shillings. She did not stop to count them; but, forgetting her basket and her game, ran away in search of the seekers.

"Papa—Isabel!" she cried, as she drew near; "come and see what I have found."

"Found!" said Mr. King. "I thought you were to hide and we to find. Have you been playing a game with the fairies?"

"No; but look here." She held up the purse.

"A purse! Where did you find it?" asked Mary and Isabel.

"Close to the path, over there, among the long grass."

"Do you think some one has lost it, papa?" asked Isabel.

"I am afraid so. Let me look at it. It is a poor little purse. Have you looked inside?"

"Yes, papa," said Rose; "lots of shillings and sixpences."

Mr. King opened the purse, and counted six shillings and sixpence.

"Some poor person has lost it, I'm afraid," he said, returning the money to its place.

"What a good thing we have found it," said Rose. "How glad they will be!"

"But we have not found them yet," said Mary.

"Papa, let us go and find them," said Rose, eagerly. "I shall be so glad to give it back to them."

"Yes; but I'm afraid it will be very difficult to find the people. We do not know where this path leads."

"It leads to that little house in the other field," said Rose. "Perhaps the people there have lost it."

"The path leads beyond that," said Mr. King; "but we will go there and inquire. The Lord knows if any poor person is in need of this money, and he will direct us."

"May I carry it, papa?" said Rose, as they drew near the cottage.

"Yes; but do not say anything about it till I have spoken with the people."

“Why, papa?”

*Why* was a very favourite question of Rose's. Martha always objected to it; but papa sometimes answered it. He did so now.

“Dear child,” he said, “do you forget what our hearts are? how deceitful? If we told these people we had found a purse with money in it, they might be tempted to say it was theirs when it was not.”

This explanation presented a new view of the matter to Rose, and she was very silent while they entered the little garden in front of the cottage and knocked at the door.

A woman opened it. “She does not look wicked,” thought Rose. “I hope she won't guess what we've found, and say it is hers.” She was much surprised at her father's not asking immediately if she had lost anything.

He said, “Good morning.” Then he admired her cottage, and the pretty green fields which surrounded it, and asked if there were other houses near.

“Just one,” said the woman; “and then there's a great space without any.”

“Where does this path lead?” asked Mr. King.

“I don't know,” replied the woman. “It's not my way mostly. I only go on this side as far as the high road to the town.”

"Do many pass this way?" asked Mr. King.

"Not many; just a few workmen, now and then, from the town. There's a road, you see, runs this same way, and they keep to that mostly."

"And is the other house you spoke of inhabited?"

"Yes; but it's lone enough for the most part. 'Tis a widow lives there, with one child. She has a son, too; but he works in the town, and only comes back of a Saturday evening. Poor lad, he come well nigh to break his heart, too, last time; for all the little wages he'd got, when he got home he couldn't find them. He never spent a penny of them, I'll be bound. An honest lad never walked. I told him not to take on. He'd just lost it, says I, somewhere along the road."

Rose had scarcely been able to keep silence during this last speech of the woman's; and now she took her papa's hand, and squeezed it tightly, to remind him of the purse, for she feared he had forgotten it.

"My little girl hopes," he said, "to be able to help these poor people; for she has just found a purse, and we think it may be theirs. Show it, Rose."

Rose needed no second bidding, but held her treasure up before the woman's astonished eyes.

"Bless me!" she ejaculated, almost overcome



with wonder and honest joy. "To think, now, of that there purse a-turning up again after four days as it's been lost! And to think, too, of its being little miss to find it, as is so ready to give it back to them as wants it. Will you take it to 'em, miss?"

"Yes," said Rose. "May we, papa?"

"Yes. This next house, is it not? We are much obliged to you. Good morning."

Rose could hardly walk for happiness. She skipped along, as her father said, like a young kid bounding over imaginary rocks and chasms, until they reached their destination.

The door, as soon as they knocked, was opened by a very tidily dressed woman, who appeared somewhat surprised at the sight of so many visitors, but bade them welcome, nevertheless.

"We heard," said Mr. King, "from your neighbour, that you have lost something."

"Indeed, and we have," said the woman, her countenance falling. "My son, last Saturday, lost his week's wages; just dropped them out of his pocket in the fields."

"Does he get large wages?"

"Twelve shillings about, sir. He's a likely lad, and a kinder never stepped. He brings the half of it back every week for the child and me. It's not much, you'll say, to be grieving after; but it's a

great deal for poor folk to lose. But there, I promised my boy I'd not take on about it. 'Mother,' he says, 'I'll save all I can, and I'll make it up to you.' And Nelly, she says, 'Mother, stop looking after that money; it's left in the field, but the Lord will make it up to you.' And so He has, although I seem to be forgetting it just now; for all day yesterday He made me so happy, I just felt better than if I'd had the money in my hand. And it's summer-time, and we haven't seemed to want it. And, Nancy Davis, says I to myself, maybe some poor soul will find it as wants it more than you, and the Lord has took it away for them. 'He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord.' Can't you lend to the Lord, Nancy Davis? After this I felt ashamed of myself, and I'd clean forgot about grieving until you came, sir."

"I'm glad to hear it. I am very glad that you knew whom to look to in your trouble. I think the cause is over now, though, for we can tell you something of your money. Rose, show Mrs. Davis the purse you found."

Rose laid it on the table.

"Ben's purse!" exclaimed the woman; "his own purse, sure as life! Where did you find it, miss?"

"In the field, under the grass, a little after the great tree," replied Rose.

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"Sure enough, and the boy's own purse!" said the woman, turning it over and over in her hand.

"It is better to get it by trusting than by grieving," said Mr. King.

"Ah, yes, sir," replied the woman. "That's my Nelly's way more than mine, though. If it hadn't been for her, sir, maybe I'd still have been fretting."

"Mother," cried a small, child's voice from the inner room, "mother, aren't you gone? What are you about?"

"Wouldn't the young ladies step in and see my Nelly? It would please her to hear the sound of their voices."

"Thank you; they would like to see her very much."

"May I give her the purse?" said Rose.

"Indeed, and you shall," replied the woman, giving back Rose's treasure into her hands.

She opened the door.

"Nelly," she said, "here's a gentleman and ladies come to see you."

"They are very kind," said the small voice again.

The three children went in; Mr. King stood behind. A little girl sat near the window. She was very neatly dressed in a dark blue print frock and black apron. Her hair was smoothly brushed

off her face, and tied in plaits behind. It was not all this that struck the children so much, as the look of repose about her, and the very quiet way in which she rose from her chair to receive them, almost without raising her head. Rose felt unaccountably shy of this little girl; she seemed so different from any she had seen before.

"Isabel, you speak," she whispered.

"Rose has been so fortunate as to find the purse which your brother lost a few days ago," said Isabel, "and your mother said she might bring it to you."

"Here!" said Rose, holding it up. "See, your mother says it is his purse. Look! look! don't you see?"—for though the little girl had raised her head at the sound of Rose's voice, half-closed eyelids and very long black lashes almost hid her eyes.

"Mother," she said, turning towards her as she entered the room, "don't they know?"

"Oh, sure," exclaimed Mrs. Davis, dropping the key she held in her hand; "I never thought to tell them! It's of no use to hold it to her, miss; she can't see."

"Can't see!" repeated Rose, not yet able to take in the truth.

"She's blind," said the woman.

"Blind!" said Rose; "blind! Oh dear," she

said, dropping the purse, and covering her face in uncontrollable grief ; " I never thought of that. Can't she see at all ? Papa, papa," she called to her father, who was in the other room, " the little girl is blind !"

" Don't, Rose, don't," whispered Isabel, fearing she might distress the blind girl.

But Rose could not yet understand anything beyond the one terrible fact. " Can't she see ?" she repeated ; " can't she see at all, papa ? Can't she see us, or the room, or the sun and the fields, or her mother ? Can't she see her own mother ?"

Nelly herself answered these questions.

" Come and sit down," she said, resuming her seat, and laying her hand on another chair which her mother had placed by her. " I cannot see you, but I like to hear you talk. Come," she said again, taking Rose's hand and drawing her gently into the chair.

" Don't you love the poor little girl," whispered Isabel again, seeing that Rose had withdrawn her hand and seated herself as far as might be from Nelly, and that her face still expressed more of awe than anything else.

" Yes ; I do love her," said Rose.

" You are crying," said Nelly. " You mustn't."

Rose could not say anything. While she was

fighting with her tears, Isabel picked up the purse, which had been forgotten on the floor, and put it into Nelly's hand. She was so afraid lest the blind child should have been distressed by Rose's grief at her affliction, that she wanted as much as possible to turn her thoughts from it.

Nelly stroked the purse softly with her hand.

"It is his," she said. "Poor Ben, how glad he will be! He was very sorry to have lost mother's money."

Then she laid it aside, and seemed to recall herself to the duty of entertaining her guests.

"You are not sitting down," she said, turning to Mary. "I think there is a chair near you. And, mother, won't you give the gentleman a chair?"

"You did not expect so much company to-day," said Mr. King, coming near. Until now, he had been standing in the doorway. "You haven't shaken hands with me."

Nelly put her little hand confidently into the one that awaited it.

"You are very kind, sir," she said.

Isabel remembered with a pang that she could not say, as she herself would have done, "I'm very glad to see you."

"You have a pleasant seat here," said Mr. King.

"Oh, very pleasant, sir," replied Nelly, with a

bright smile. "Do you see the flowers, miss, just outside the window," she continued, turning to Rose.

"Yes." Rose's heart began to smite her; she remembered Isabel's words, and thought that perhaps she had not appeared to love the little girl for whom she was so sorry.

"I do love you," she said suddenly, turning to Nelly. "May I give you a kiss?"

Nelly's answer was to bend her head and kiss the little hand which had again stolen into hers.

Rose gave her kiss very gravely. She could not yet think of Nelly as of any other little girl; but the feeling of horror was gone; a mixture of tenderness and solemnity was what she now felt towards her new friend.

"Do you like my garden?" said Nelly again presently. "This bit near the window is what Ben calls my garden; he has put sweet-scented flowers here. I know where they all grow; so I can pick whatever I like by myself."

"She's uncommon handy, considering," said her mother.

"Happy, mother," corrected Nelly. She hardly liked to appropriate this small praise.

"It is well to be both," said Mr. King. "And what makes you so happy?"

"Oh, sir," replied Nelly, as if surprised at the

question, "a great many things. Everything. Aren't you happy?" she said, touching Isabel's hand. She did not like to put the question to Mr. King.

"Yes," replied Isabel.

"Mother's happy, too," said Nelly. "Aren't we, mother?"

"Yes, sure," said Mrs. Davis. "A happier little soul than my Nelly couldn't be. All day long she's a-singing or a-smiling. Sometimes, with the birds and she, I can't hear which is which."

"What do you sing?" inquired Mr. King.

"A great many things. Does the young lady sing?"—she turned to Rose.

"Yes; but I wish you would now."

A bright colour overspread Nelly's pale face.

"Not now," she said. "I can't sing as well as you do."

"Oh, better than I can," interrupted Rose quickly.

"Perhaps not so well as Isabel; but we should like to hear you."

"The gentleman," objected Nelly, very softly; but he caught the words.

"Do sing," he said; "you will give us so much pleasure."

She made no further objection. "There is one hymn I like almost better than all the others; shall I sing that?" she asked simply.



“Yes, do,” said Isabel.

It was strange. The blind child’s favourite hymn began with the words, “Lord, I can see.” Perhaps the thought of this hidden sight was the secret of its charm for Nelly. She lifted her head, and, with colour a little heightened and closed eyes, sang in her soft child’s voice,—

“ Lord, I can see, by faith in thee,  
A prospect bright, unfailing ;  
Where God shall shine in light divine,  
In glory never fading.

“ A home above, of peace and love,  
Close to thy holy person ;  
Thy saints shall there see glory fair,  
And shine as thy reflection.

“ Oh, how I thirst the chains to burst  
That weigh my spirit downward,  
And there to flow in love’s full glow,  
With hearts like thine surrounded !

“ No more to feel, in woe or weal,  
A thought or wish unholy ;  
No more to pain the Lamb once slain,  
But live to love thee wholly !

“ Lord, haste that day of cloudless ray—  
That prospect bright, unfailing,  
Where God shall shine in light divine,  
In glory never fading !”

“I know that hymn,” said Isabel. “How did you learn it?”

“Every Sunday afternoon mother and Ben teach

me a hymn, and I say over those I have learned ; and so I get a great many."

"We are much obliged to you," said Mr. King, now rising, "for the pleasant half-hour we have spent."

"Are you going, papa? Not yet," said Rose.

"I am sure you are sorry to go," said her father ; "but I fear we are detaining Mrs. Davis ; she is waiting to go out."

"I am going to do a half-day's washing just outside the town," said Mrs. Davis. "I'm sorry to be obliged to go ; but if I might make so bold as to ask you to lock the door, Nelly would take it very kindly if you stayed a while longer with her. I always lock the door, you see, sir, when I leave. She's a poor blind thing to be left in the house alone, and when I know the key's turned upon her, I don't feel so frightened like."

Locked into the house alone, and in darkness ! Rose's horror began to come over her again.

Mrs. Davis continued : "My Nelly don't like to be locked in. 'Mother,' she says, 'it seems to me you put more faith in your key than in the Lord's care.' I haven't got the trust she has, you see, so I still lock the door. Maybe some day I won't. I open the window, and when I'm out I just put the key inside. Nelly knows how to find it and shut the

window; and then I'm easy, and so's she. But then she's always easy."

" 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee,' " said Mr. King.

" Papa, dear papa," whispered Rose, " don't let the little girl be locked in alone. Can't she come away with us?"

" Ask her," said Mr. King.

" Nelly," said Rose, " I don't like you to be locked in alone. We are going out into the fields, and papa, and we all, want you to come with us."

Nelly raised her blind eyes to her little friend's eager face, as if she did not quite understand the invitation.

" It's my birth-day. Won't you come?" said Rose.

" Mother!" called Nelly, almost overcome with surprise and pleasure.

Mrs. Davis stood curtsying, first to Mr. King, and then to Rose.

" You will let her come, will you not?" said Mr. King, seeing she did not know how to reply. " We will take great care of her. It is my little girl's birth-day, and as she found your purse, I think you will not refuse her."

Mrs. Davis found voice at last. " Oh, sir," she

said, "I never thought ; but if you are so kind—only, my Nelly's not dressed fit company for little Miss. If you would wait"—

"Don't keep the ladies waiting," said Nelly, smoothing down her print dress with quiet dignity. "You're very good, Miss. Will you bring my things, mother?"

Her mother brought a hat and little gray shawl.

"Let me dress her," said Isabel.

"Well, I never ; she is handy and kind," said Mrs. Davis, standing by while Isabel pinned Nelly's shawl and put on her hat, and then led her from the room. Rose felt Nelly to be her particular guest, but she was almost afraid to guide her out of the house and across the field ; so she left her to Isabel, and walked behind with Mary and her father.

"I feel happier and happier," she said, as they once more reached the great tree.





## CHAPTER IX.

### UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE.

**M**R. KING looked at his watch, and that said "Dinner-time." The children's appetites, too, said "Dinner-time," very loudly; so a comfortable seat was found for Nelly, where she might hear them at their work; and then the baskets were unpacked.

First appeared the table-cloth; and this was spread under the tree. To Isabel and Rose, the setting of a dinner-table was a glorious novelty; to Mary, it was a daily duty. To-day it was a duty performed under the very pleasantest auspices and with the very heartiest enjoyment. Still, she hardly looked upon it as a fit occupation for a birth-day queen.

"Rose ought not to be laying the cloth," she said, just as the plates had been unpacked, and Rose was preparing to distribute them. "We ought to get everything ready for her, and then call her, because she is the queen."

"I think she likes to help," said Isabel.

"But she might be doing something else," said Mary—"talking to Nelly, or gathering flowers. Couldn't you, Rose? Let us do this; we will get everything ready."

Rose very strongly objected to Mary's ideas of the occupations which befitted her; but Mary was her guest to-day, and she thought that to dispute her wishes would not be polite, so she very reluctantly laid down the plate she was carrying.

Isabel saw her sister's disappointment; but she, too, was unwilling to contradict her friend. "Could you not find some flowers to ornament the dishes?" she said; "it would look so pretty, and so much more like a birth-day party."

"Come and help me to gather them," said Mr. King, who had watched the scene, and felt pleased with his little girl's self-denial.

Rose took her father's hand, and soon forgot her disappointment in the pleasure of filling her lap with the freshest flowers.

"Won't our table look nice, papa? At least, we haven't any table; but the table-cloth and the dishes will look grand. And are not we a large party now? I'm so glad we found Nelly! But"—

"What is it?" said Mr. King; for Rose had let fall her dress, and the flowers lay scattered and disregarded at her feet.

"It's of no use," she said, struggling with her tears; "it's all of no use! Nelly can't see the table, or the flowers, or anything. I can't bear it!"

"Nelly bears it," said Mr. King, gently.

"Yes," said Rose; "but why—why is it? Why can't she see, as we do?"

"Rose," called the soft voice from under the tree. They had walked round it to behind Nelly's seat, in their search for flowers, and her quick ear had caught these last words.

"She is calling you; go to her," said Mr. King, who thought that the blind child herself would be the best comforter.

"Come," said Nelly, as Rose approached. "Sit beside me. Are you sad? What is the matter?"

Rose made no reply.

"I heard," said Nelly; "but you mustn't say it again. Shall I tell you why?" and she touched her eyes. "Because God loved me so much. He did," repeated the blind child, quietly, as if for her own reassurance. "I will tell you about it. I wasn't always so. Once I had fine eyes—hazel, people called them—and everybody used to tell me how pretty I was. I don't mind saying that, because it's gone now. The ladies used to take a great deal of notice of me in the place where we lived. That was nearly three years ago. Then I fell ill of

measles, and they went to my eyes, and at last I grew quite blind, just as you see me now. Mother and Ben felt dreadful about it; father was dead before then. It was he taught me to know God, and to love texts and hymns; I didn't always. Father used to make me learn a great many, and sometimes I didn't want to do it; but now I'm so glad. After he died, I was growing foolish and vain. I was pleased when the ladies noticed me so much, and I often thought about what they said. Well, when my eyes were nearly shut, like now, and I couldn't see, I was very unhappy; but somehow I could never feel as bad as mother. When father was just dying—his last words almost—he said, 'Nancy'—that's mother—'the bit house and the other things is yours; and, Ben, the mother is for you. You'll take care of her like a good lad, I know. And, Nelly,' he said, turning round to me—'Nelly, I leave you to the Lord. He'll care for you.' I felt sure these words were true, and I couldn't forget them even when I fell blind, though I couldn't understand it then. Well, one day mother and Ben were reading out from the Psalms, and they came to this,—'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' I always listened to anything about eyes or seeing, and this took hold on me. I didn't hear anything after that. 'That's the reason,'



I said : ' I was looking at vanity and forgetting the Lord ; but the Lord cared for me, as father said, and he has just turned away mine eyes from beholding vanity.' "

" That is why ? " said Rose, half questioning.

" Yes," answered Nelly, with quiet assurance ;  
" that is why."

" I will not be sad any more, then," said Rose.  
" At least, I will try. And you have seen the flowers ? "

" Oh yes, plenty," replied Nelly. " That is nice, because if you tell me what you have got, I shall know what it's like."

" Shall you ? " said Rose, with renewed animation, collecting her scattered flowers. " I have got daisies then."

" They are small," said Nelly, " with little, short stalks, and very upright heads ; and the flower is made of tiny white leaves, like feathers."

" Sometimes a little pink," said Rose.

" Yes," said Nelly ; " just at the points, and a bunch of yellow in the middle ; and they shine all over the fields, just as the stars shine over the sky."

" That's it ! " said Rose, delighted. " Now I have a pimpernel."

" Pimpernel ? " repeated Nelly, turning her head with a puzzled look. " I don't know that."

"It is smaller than the daisies. Oh, a great deal smaller, with a thin, thin stalk, not very straight; it lies along the ground, I think. It has a little yellow in the middle, and then a little lilac, and then bright scarlet leaves."

"I know that scarlet flower. Poor man's weather-glass, we call it. I think you have convolvulus," added Nelly, taking one of the delicate trails from Rose's lap. "Pink and white, is it not? The pure white are larger."

"Yes," said Rose; "I have some of them too."

She sat silent a little while.

"You can't know me," she said at last. "You have never seen me."

"No," replied Nelly. She seemed to be seeking some new comfort. "I have never seen you. But I shall some day. I hope so. Shall I?"

"In heaven?" said Rose. "Nelly will see there," she said to herself, and this thought kept her happy.

Meanwhile Isabel and Mary had brought the dinner to that state of preparation in which the guests only were wanting; and the guests were ready; so Rose distributed her flowers, and they took their places.

Certainly nothing was wanting to that feast. Not only because the chicken and sandwiches were excellent and fully appreciated, because Rose's little basket

had contributed the ripest and freshest of strawberries, or because plum-cake tastes nice when eaten under a tree by three hungry little queens, but because no one there felt a want unsupplied or a wish ungratified. Why was this? Was it that no daintier repast had ever been spread in a gorgeous palace? Or that those who partook brought with them that merry heart which "is a continual feast?"

When the dinner was eaten, the washing of the plates was very merrily accomplished in the brook. Rose assisted in this duty, and thereby seriously damaged the front of her dress, no longer spotless; but Martha, the person who would have been most concerned at this accident, was so far away that Rose's peace of mind was but slightly disturbed.

After their many labours, they felt quite glad to sit down to rest and cool themselves under the tree. No more running games were to be thought of; the play was to be quiet, on Nelly's account. She begged them not to think of her; she would have been quite happy to sit patiently on the grass and listen to their laughter, but of this they would not hear. Rose especially urged that the game should be one in which Nelly could take a part.

"Papa, what shall we play at?" asked Rose.

"You should not refer to me," said Mr. King; "it is so long since I played, that I know no games

except the very successful one of 'Hide-and-seek,' which we played this morning, and 'Leap Frog,' and 'Blind Man's Buff.' "

"Those wouldn't do," said Rose, decidedly. "There is 'Old Soldier;' or, 'How, When, and Where?'" Nelly, do you know those."

"No," replied Nelly; "but never mind me."

"Mary, do you remember a game Miss Elliot taught us?" asked Isabel; "I think Nelly could play that. It is not a game exactly. One person mentions anything they see or think of."

"I remember," said Mary; "and then the others each say a text from the Bible bringing in that word."

"Yes," said Isabel. "First, the one who chooses a word, repeats the text it has made her think of. Miss Elliot taught us this game, because she said there is scarcely anything we can see or feel, of which God has not spoken. Shall you like that, Rose? I think Nelly can play it."

"Yes, I like it. Do you, Nelly? and you, papa?"

"Very much," said Mr. King. "Does it remind you of what I was saying this morning about the works of God?"

"Yes," said Rose. "This will be the words of God. Shall Isabel begin, as she chose the game?"

Isabel looked round her. It was hard to choose

from among so many pleasant things, but at last her eyes fell on the little brook.

“Water,” she said. “‘Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’”

Mr. King spoke next. “‘When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.’”

“‘Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,’” said Mary.

“I cannot think of water,” said Rose; “will waters do?”

“Yes,” said Isabel.

“‘He leadeth me beside the still waters,’” said Rose. “Nelly, you haven’t said anything.”

Nelly had not kept silence because she was not ready, but from her usual habit of quietness; and being thus called upon, she repeated her verse,—  
“‘Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of

a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' ”

“Now, papa,” said Isabel ; “it is your turn to choose a word. Not anything very difficult, please.”

“My word will not be difficult,” said Mr. King. “I have chosen it already. It is children. ‘While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.’ ”

“That is an easy word,” said Rose. “I know my verse,—‘Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ ”

“Are you ready, Nelly ? ”

The soft voice answered,—“‘All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.’ ”

“Now, Mary,” said Isabel.

“‘I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth,’ ” said Mary. It was the text she always remembered as her father’s, which might be read as a motto in almost all his letters ; and as she repeated it, she thought that perhaps even now, from his place of rest, he might be watching her, and she prayed that the joy of her text might be his.

Isabel’s came last.

“‘Little children, abide in him.’ ”

"It is Nelly's choice now, I think," said Mr. King.

Nelly had no need to look about her; she seemed to look within, for she bowed her head and considered a little before she spoke. "Light," she said, presently,— "'In thy light shall we see light.'"

Isabel spoke next. "'The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'"

" 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?' " said Mary.

"Mine is very short," said Rose. "I couldn't find a longer one. 'God is light.'"

"Mine is longer, that will make up for yours," said Mr. King, "though shortness cannot take from its truth and beauty. 'The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.'"

It was strange that as the blind child had chosen "light," so the child who had known least of the shelter of home, and who had earliest been made to take a part in the glare and hurry of life, should choose "shadow," as that for which she most longed.

" 'The shadow of a great rock in a weary land,' " said Mary.

"May I say your text, papa?" asked Rosa.  
"Your verse about the shadow."

"Say it," replied her father. "I hope it may be yours."

And Rose said,—"'My soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge.'"

"Now, Isabel."

"Is not Nelly ready?" asked Isabel.

"'Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat,' " said Nelly.

"'In the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice,' " said Isabel.

"Can you find another, papa? now that I have taken yours?" said Rose.

"'In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me,' " was her father's answer.

"Now, Rose," said her sister, "it is your turn to choose."

"I have chosen," said Rose; "can you guess what it is?"

"Flower?" suggested Nelly. "You are so fond of the flowers."

"That is it," said Rose. "I have chosen flower. 'The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.' "



The children found this word difficult. Mary spoke first. " 'All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth.' "

"I cannot think of the word flower," said Nelly.  
"May I say something about the flowers?"

"Yes, do," said Rose.

Nelly continued: " 'Consider the lilies, how they grow; they toil not, they spin not: and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' "

"Now, Isabel, can you find anything?" said Mary.

"Mine is rather like yours," said Isabel. " 'As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.' "

These words, repeated by Isabel, struck Mr. King with a thrill. He looked at the flowers they had gathered a few hours before, now withered at their feet, and then at the children, now full of life and beauty as the flowers had been. As fair, but as fragile as they. "Well for those who can say the continuation," he said, speaking his thoughts aloud. "That shall be my verse. 'But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.' "

They sat a few moments in silence. The light

and the shadow, the flowing water, and the delicate flowers around them, spoke now with a new voice to the children's hearts.

"Is my little girl tired?" said Mr. King at last, drawing Isabel, who sat beside him, to rest in his arms.

"No, papa dear," she replied. "It is very pleasant here."

"Indeed it is," he said; "but we must leave it now, I fear. It is getting late, and we have a long walk before us. Come, children, put on your hats, and take up your baskets."

"They are lighter now," said Rose. "That is a good thing."

"Did you find the weight of the strawberries very oppressive as you came?" asked her father, smiling.

"No, papa; but your basket must have been heavy."

"But I am strong," said Mr. King. "Will Nelly take my hand?"

To say good-bye to Nelly, at her cottage door, was a hard task, but it was gone through bravely, and she was locked in, with many assurances from the soft voice that she didn't mind it.

"I don't think Nelly minds anything," said Rose.

The walk home was perhaps less gay than the

morning one had been, for they were all a little tired, but it was very pleasant, through the lengthening shadows and the bright evening sunshine ; and then, as Isabel said, they had the remembrance, which they could not enjoy in the morning.

Mary, indeed, could not help, as they drew near the town, remembering Mrs. Mason and her daily life, with a sense of bitter contrast, but she thought repining would be a poor thanksgiving for all she had enjoyed, and resolutely chased dull thoughts away.

Martha was at home, glad, but of course extremely surprised, to see them return "with their heads on their shoulders." She had visited her invalid, had abused the medicines, shaken her sister's confidence in the doctor, told her she would never get well "the way she was going on," and then scolded her so vehemently for depression that she had left her in tears.

Isabel thought, when these grievances were related, that their day, although spent in pleasure, which Martha despised, had been the most profitable. Mary and Nelly had certainly found it the happiest.





## CHAPTER X.

### ROSE'S SECRET.

**T**O return to school and the every-day routine would have been very distasteful to so gay a little lady as Rose, if she had not remembered Violetta and her proposed stay at Laurel House.

She took her friend's little namesake with her, though its wardrobe was, at present, very scanty. Violetta did not seem so highly flattered as Rose had expected, on being told that the doll was exactly like her, and remarked that she had a much finer baby at home.

"Oh, such a large one," said Violetta; "quite four times as large as yours, with wax hands and feet; and it is dressed just like a real baby, in a long white frock, trimmed with lace—real lace; and a blue cashmere cloak, and a little lace cap with white ribbon. Then it has a hood—a real baby's hood of white silk."

"Do bring it to show me," said Rose, whose doll

had slipped from her lap, and lay unheeded at her feet. Its glories, once so magnificent, had, one by one, been eclipsed, and died out. It was strange that Violetta's company, which Rose so persistently sought, generally raised feelings of longing and discontent in her mind, to which, under other circumstances, she was a happy stranger.

"I wish I could see your doll; do bring it," she said again, with more envy than congratulation.

"I can't," replied Violetta; "nurse would not let me."

"I may do what I like with *my* doll," said Rose, with restored complacency.

"But mine was a very expensive doll," replied Violetta, in the tone of superiority which was so trying to Rose. "It is very handsome, and nurse says, if anything were to happen to it, I might not get another like it. Besides, if I brought the doll, that would not be half. I have a little room fitted up on purpose for it, that opens out of my nursery. There is a cradle, with white muslin curtains lined with pink and trimmed with lace; and a little rocking-chair, in which I hush her to sleep; and a wash-hand stand, which mamma brought me from Paris; it is covered with white marble, and it holds a pretty blue and gold jug and basin. Then I have a chest of drawers to hold all her clothes, and a

trunk for when she travels ; and she has a brush and comb and looking-glass, just like a real baby."

Both the children were out of breath ; Violetta with talking, and Rose with listening.

Violetta recovered first.

"I wish you could see it all," she said. "You would not care a bit for your poor little doll afterwards."

This was by no means a desirable object, but silly Rose fixed her heart on it, nevertheless, and hastened to reply, anxious that her friend should not think her wanting in taste. "Oh, I don't now ; at least, not much," she added, with a remorseful recollection of the sisterly love which had gone with the despised gift.

"If you could come to my house," said Violetta, "you could see my things and play with them."

Not only to behold these wonders, but actually to be allowed to handle and play with them ! Every other idea in Rose's mind was swallowed up in this magnificent prospect.

"I wish I could come !" she said. "Isabel has a friend she goes to see ; almost all the girls have a friend ; and you are mine, aren't you ? My particular friend." The idea of being any one's "particular friend" was pleasing to Violetta's self-importance, besides her little friend's admiration and affection

had awakened a kindred though unacknowledged feeling. Violetta began to long to receive a visit from Rose almost as ardently as Rose could desire to pay one.

"Perhaps you can come," she said, after a little consideration; "there is no one at home with me now but nurse. Some day, after school, if nurse would let you."

"Isn't she cross?" asked Rose, who remembered her vision of the grand nurse in the garden.

"No," said Violetta, doubtfully. "Sometimes, when anything puts her out. But I can get her to do things for me."

"How?"

"Oh, I give her something, or do something for her. Once, when mamma was away, I stopped all day with the housemaid, that nurse might go a trip somewhere in the train, and not come back till evening; and, the next night, before mamma came back, she took me with her and her cousin to the theatre. I paid for the seats, out of some money papa had given me before he went away; but nurse let me go, and it was *such* fun."

Such fun as Rose had never heard of. She hardly understood this tale.

"Won't your nurse do anything for you?" asked Violetta, presently.

"Martha? Oh no! I am sure. She never lets us do anything except sometimes, if it is wet on a Saturday afternoon, see her make a pie for Sunday, if we promise not to get any of the flour on our frocks."

"Not if you give her anything?" said Violetta, with utter contempt of Martha's one favour.

"She does not care for anything."

"Couldn't you do anything for her?"

"She does not care to do anything. Except sometimes, when she takes a holiday, she washes her china ornaments. There's an old blind man with a dog, and a little girl carrying a basket of flowers, and a little boy reading a book. She shows them to us sometimes, but she would never let me wash them, or touch them; she is very much afraid they should be broken, for she says she means to give them to Isabel and me when we are married. Isabel will get hers first, for she will be married first, I expect, because people never are married till they are old; but I hope she will not choose the little girl with the flowers, because that is what I want."

"Would not Isabel let you come home with me?" said Violetta, recalling her friend from the wedding present to the momentous point then under consideration. "Or your papa? Papa often lets me do



things, if I teaze him a great deal, after mamma has said No."

"I should not like to teaze him," said Rose. "And I am sure he would not let me go. He does not like us to go out."

"But Isabel goes to see her friend. Your papa does not mind that."

"He doesn't know! It's a secret!" replied Rose, quickly.

These words had escaped her almost involuntarily, but, once uttered, they did more towards unsettling her mind as to the impossibility of visiting her friend and beholding the wonderful doll's apartment, than any amount of argument from Violetta could have done.

Isabel was her pattern, the mirror in which she was wont to behold all that her papa would approve, her aim and model in all things.

And what did that mirror show now? A secret! Isabel had a secret. Why should not Rose have a secret too?

She started at the thought.

Your secret is very different, said Conscience. Yours is a secret, because those who have the rule over you, and to whom you should submit yourself, would disapprove. Isabel has told you the reason of her secret. "Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth."

While these thoughts passed through Rose's mind, Violetta's had not been idle. Her opinion was expressed almost in the words which were tempting Rose.

"If Isabel has a secret, you can have one too."

"I don't know," faltered Rose.

"Are you afraid? Dear me, it is very easy. I have often kept a secret. Just get away from the house; I will manage somehow to make nurse say Yes, and we will meet you round the corner of your street. Martha will never know, and your papa and your sister will be out."

"Isabel?"

"Yes; she will be gone to see her friend, to do her secret, while you do yours. Don't you see? It is very easy. And we shall have such fun, and perhaps I shall find something to give you for your doll."

"But I don't like to."

"Then I do not believe you love me," exclaimed Violetta, beginning to feel angry. "If you don't like to come and see me, you cannot be my friend. Isabel goes to see her friend."

"I will come," said Rose, stung by Violetta's imputation of coldness. "When?"

"To-morrow, I expect; but I will tell you in the morning. I must coax nurse first, and she is more

troublesome every time. She will want all sorts of things, but I don't mind that, because I love you."

"I do love you," said Rose. She had forgotten what Miss Elliot had said about loving a little girl.

Isabel did not visit Mary that afternoon, for Martha had ordered her to come home directly she left school, and "put her things straight after racketing about all yesterday."

Isabel did not think that their very harmless "racketing" in the fields could have done much damage to her possessions, which, excepting the clothes she had worn, had been left at home; but she obediently conformed to Martha's demands, which, for once, coincided with Rose's desires, for, in her present state of excitement, to sit an hour in Mrs. Mason's little parlour would have been intolerable: she felt unable to do anything but walk aimlessly about the room; preparing her lessons without heart or interest, afraid to talk, lest she should betray her secret,—she felt thoroughly unhappy.

Isabel noticed her sister's restlessness, but attributed it to yesterday's pleasure-taking.

Rose experienced her sharpest pang the next morning, when she discovered that her pre-occupa-

tion had nearly made her forget her father's morning flower.

As yet, her affections were more alive than her conscience.

A congratulatory sign from Violetta, as they entered the school-room, intimated that her share of the business had been accomplished with success, and made Rose blush scarlet, and look so agitated, that Isabel inquired of her if anything was the matter.

"Nothing," answered Rose. She preserved her secret, but threw away her last chance of a heart at rest; and it needed a new description from Violetta of all the doll's possessions to rekindle the ardour of her desire to spend an hour in the doll's room.

"Nurse was very kind," said Violetta; "she said you might come, and she would give us some cake and wine to make a doll's feast, if I would go to bed an hour before my time, that she might have Dawson—that's the cook—and James, our coachman, to supper at eight o'clock. I did not mind that, you know, so I promised directly, and you will come round the corner of your street and meet us, as soon as your sister is gone away."

Isabel was glad that, this afternoon, no prohibition of Martha's stood in the way of her visit to Mary; she was very anxious to know how her

friend had fared since the day they had spent in the fields together; whether she was behind-hand with her work, and whether Mrs. Mason had in any way revenged herself for the permission which had been so hardly wrested from her.

On leaving Laurel House, she almost mechanically took the road to Mrs. Mason's, and great indeed was her surprise when her sister refused to accompany her.

"I am not going with you. I do not want to see Mary. I'm not going!" repeated Rose, growing violent from her dislike to withstand her sister's wishes.

"Very well," replied Isabel, quietly, much astonished at this outbreak. "I will not go, if you really dislike it; we will take a walk somewhere else. Where shall it be?"

"Nowhere! I don't want to go. I am going home."

"Home? when it is so fine!" said Isabel. "That is a pity; and I think papa likes us to take a walk when we have been at school all day."

"But I cannot take a walk," exclaimed Rose; "I tell you I cannot. I will go home; I must go!" Her excitement found vent in tears.

Isabel began to think that her sister must be ill, or in some difficulty with her lessons.

"Is anything the matter?" she asked, taking the homeward road as the surest way of quieting the child; "anything I can help you about?"

"No, no; I only want to go home. I can go alone. You go and see Mary."

"I cannot let you go through the streets alone," said Isabel.

"Why?" asked Rose, quickly.

"Papa says he trusts me to take care of you."

Papa's tender thought for her, his sweet rosebud, as he loved to call her. It awoke a feeling of remorse in his little daughter's heart, a dislike of the stolen pleasure she was about to taste. But it won't hurt papa, said that silly heart, when consulted; Violetta says papas don't understand little girls; her nurse said so.

They had almost reached home. "I had rather stay and help you than see Mary," said Isabel, still believing that unconquerable lessons were the secret of her little sister's distress.

"No"—Rose in her hurry forgot to say, Thank you—"I don't want anything."

"And you will stay with Martha, if I go out? I shall not be long. You do not mind my leaving you?"

"No."

Rose had never thought to say No so readily, to such a question from Isabel.

For a moment Isabel almost resolved not to leave her sister. She stood with her hand on the gate, half ready to enter. "I must leave off going to Mary, if it makes Rose unhappy," she thought; "but I must go and tell her so. Martha will take care of Rose."

An hour later, how uselessly she longed that she had not trusted to this. But now, she wished her sister good-bye, opened the gate, and watched her go into the garden. "Tell Martha I shall soon be home," she said; and then she went back along the street, running, for she was anxious to return quickly.

Rose's heart beat violently as Isabel turned from her: afraid, on the one hand, lest Martha should see her from the window, and so, at the last, defeat the object for which she had already gone through so much; on the other, lest her sister should look round and, seeing her still at the gate, return to inquire the reason. Oppressed with the sense of mystery and guilt, her position was by no means desirable, and she was very glad when, Isabel having disappeared, she could venture to leave the garden and proceed to the place where she was to be met by Violetta and her nurse.

This important personage received her so amiably, that Rose wondered how she could ever have thought

of her as disagreeable. Violetta honoured her with a spasmodic embrace, which Rose interpreted to mean "my particular friend."

The marvels which had allured her had not been exaggerated; indeed Rose considered that they had not half been enumerated or done justice to.

Number 5 in Chestnut Park was so splendid a mansion as quite to eclipse the little house in Spring Row, which, until then, had been Rose's one ideal of home; and when she sat in the miniature doll's room, surrounded by the tiny furniture, and hushing Violetta's beautiful baby in the low rocking-chair, all things beyond were forgotten.







## CHAPTER XI.

### ISABEL'S EXCHANGE.

**T**HE simplicity of Isabel's own character had prevented her from supposing, for one moment, that any secondary motive could be concealed under her sister's desire to return home. It was, therefore, with the most perfect confidence that Rose would be the first person she should see, that she pushed open the door, which she was surprised to find unlatched, and, entering the hall, beheld her father! "Papa," she exclaimed, "you come home! How delightful!" and in another moment she was folded in his arms.

He set her down in the parlour.

"Where is Rose?" was his first question. He was surprised that she had not been beforehand with her welcome.

"Rose?" said Isabel, astonished that her sister should not yet have discovered her father's arrival, and run to greet him; "she is with Martha, I suppose."

Isabel went to the door. "Rose," she called, "Rose! here is papa. Martha, where is Rose? She came in a long time ago," said Isabel, returning. "I think she must have guessed you were coming, for she would not take a walk with me, but came straight home."

"Came straight home, did you say?" asked Martha, who now entered with the tea-tray. "That and she didn't! I've been in every room in this house, and she's nowhere."

Isabel's face changed from pale to scarlet, and then again to white.

"Nowhere," she repeated; "nowhere? why, I brought her home myself."

"Did you bring her into the house?" inquired Mr. King.

"To the garden gate," said Isabel. "Oh, papa, do you think anything has happened?"

"And you have not seen her?" he asked of Martha.

"No, indeed," said Martha. "It's little chance she'd have had of losing herself if I had seen her. I'd have kept my eye upon her," with a reproachful glance at Isabel; "but there, I always told Miss Isabel she was not fit to have the care of her, and now"—

"Go into her room and look again," said Mr.

King, quickly cutting short this speech, and drawing his frightened little daughter into his arms.

She was speechless with terror and self-reproach.

Mr. King himself was more perplexed than alarmed. He hardly thought that, at her own door, any harm could have befallen the child, and still hoped that the mystery might be cleared by her return from the pursuit of some engrossing occupation in her room, or the lumber-room, which Rose was sometimes fond of exploring. No suspicion of the truth, that his bright, honest little Rose had deceived him, for a moment crossed his mind.

The front door handle was slowly turned. It was heard in the silent parlour. Could it be Rose, entering so noiselessly, stealing like a thief into her own father's house?

Isabel and Mr. King went into the hall. He finished opening the door.

Rose stood before them. Rose, flushed, trembling, panting, with eyes downcast—those bright eyes which, until to-day, had always met his with such honest fearlessness.

Could this be his Rose? But it was his Rose nevertheless, and for her his heart and arms were open, before he asked where she had been, before he told how she had frightened them, before she asked

forgiveness. It was there she was to confess her fault; there she was to receive his pardon.

He carried her into the parlour. "Rose, my own child, where have you been?" he said, sitting down and holding her before him.

Rose could not answer; she could not lift her eyes. The touch of her father's arm seemed a bond from which she would fain escape. She was not glad to see him! For the first time in all her life she wished him away! A very bitter pang—a very sharp sting of self-reproach, came with the thought.

The tenderly-nurtured, much-loved child was unaccustomed to bear her burdens alone. How could she bear this? It bowed her head down, down, till it rested on her father's arm.

"Rose," said Mr. King, "tell me all about it. Has any one hurt you or frightened you?"

"No," replied Rose, in a low, grave voice.

"What is it then? look up in my face and speak."

He did not say "the truth;" he felt sure that, if she looked in his face, she could not speak anything else.

"Where have you been?"

"To Chestnut Park," whispered Rose.

Chestnut Park presented no adequate attraction for Rose in Mr. King's mind; he was becoming

more and more perplexed, but he was so anxious to obtain a quiet history of her doings, that he expressed no surprise, and only asked, "What were you doing there?"

"I went to see Violetta and her beautiful doll, and the doll's things."

"Violetta!" said Mr. King, puzzled.

"Yes; a little girl at school; she asked me to come."

"And why did you go without telling any one about it? Did you not remember how frightened we should be when we did not see you?"

This "why;" it was the hardest question of all to answer. Her father guessed it might be, but thought it good to make her acknowledge her fault entirely.

"Why?" he repeated.

"I thought you would not let me go."

"And yet you went? You refused to walk with your sister. You pretended to be going home. You stole back into the house like a thief. You were shocked instead of glad to see me. You kept thoughts and wishes which you knew would grieve me hidden away in your heart. You put up a secret like a cold, hard barrier between your heart and mine; and you meant to keep it. How is this?"

These last words had been a more wounding reproach to Isabel than to Rose. She longed to unburden her secret, but her heart was too full for words, and meanwhile Rose answered.

"Isabel has a secret."

Mr. King was in nowise discomfited. He could not feel a fear lest Isabel had purposely cherished anything in her heart because she knew it to be contrary to his wishes. He trusted something stronger than love for him to keep her from this. He knew his confidence was not misplaced, so it was without the slightest fear that he asked, "What is Isabel's secret?"

"Oh, papa," said Isabel, covering her face, and resting it on the table. "What have I done? It is all me! It is all my fault!"

"Hush," said Mr. King; "Rose knows better than that. She will tell your secret."

"Isabel goes every day, or nearly every day, to visit Mary; to do some of her work."

"And she has kept it a secret from me. Why; did she think it was what I should not allow?"

"No."

"She knew it was not. She had asked me whether she might visit Mary; but why did she keep it a secret?"

"She said," replied Rose, "that when we were

able to do any kindness to another, we ought not to tell of it, but keep it a secret. Only God would know."

"Yes; God sees all secrets. He saw yours and Isabel's. While you were keeping yours, could the remembrance that God saw it come as a sweet thought to you?"

"No."

"You forgot God. 'All the people that forget God.' Do you remember the solemn verse of which those words are part? If you had remembered God, his holiness, his watchfulness, his great love, and what he has done for you, you would have been kept from this."

There was a long silence, broken only now and then by a stifled sob from Rose. She had struggled to escape from her father's arms; she felt she was not worthy to be there, but he would not let her go. How different her actions appeared to what they had done one hour before. How worthless the stolen pleasure, from which she now reaped such bitter fruits. How far greater than all Violetta's treasures, the treasure of her father's love and confidence, which she had so hastily cast aside. Her foolish affection for Violetta died out. Her last unworthy desire to be like her was poured out of her heart as the hot tears poured from her eyes.

"You are sorry," said Mr. King, "for what?"

"Everything," sobbed Rose; "for being so naughty, for keeping it from you, for being naughty to Isabel, and—and for forgetting."

Mr. King lifted her from the floor and placed her on his knee, with her head resting on his shoulder.

"You have my forgiveness," he said, sealing his words with a kiss, "and Isabel's; do you believe it?"

"Yes."

"Are you still afraid of me? Do you still wish me away from you?"

"No, no," said Rose, shocked at the expression of her own dreadful thought.

"Why?" said Mr. King.

"Because you are so kind. Because I love you."

"'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.'"

"You have believed my words; these are God's words."

Martha came in to prepare the table for tea. She would have liked to ask where Rose had been; perhaps she wished to reproach the child, and once more to remind Isabel that she was not fit to have the care of her, but something in the faces of all three showed her that her words would be misplaced, so she silently completed her arrangements and left them.



Mr. King sent Rose to bed immediately after tea. He thought that, with excitement and grief, she must be thoroughly tired, and that quiet would be the best remedy both for mind and body.

Her hymn that night was said down-stairs to her father. It was his choice.

“ Among the deepest shades of night  
Can there be one who sees my way?  
Yes; God is like a shining light,  
That turns the darkness into day.

“ When every eye around me sleeps,  
May I not sin without control?  
No; for a constant watch he keeps  
On every thought of every soul.

“ If I could find some cave unknown,  
Where human foot had never trod,  
E'en there I could not be alone;  
On every side there would be God.”

All this time Isabel had suffered yet more keenly than her little sister. Every confession Rose made, every tear Rose shed, every sigh her father heaved, entered as a sting into her heart. Her little sister led astray, her father grieved, and by her means. She who should have been a shield and guide to Rose had set her the first example of deceit—had left her when temptation was strongest—when she most needed help and counsel—and had gone on a way of her own devising, and to which she had

sacrificed, not only Rose's pleasure, but her good. So spoke Isabel's heart.

She had poured out the tea and wished Rose good night, with calmness and even an appearance of cheerfulness; for Isabel had learned to forget herself for others, and she would not now add one drop to the child's distress by exposing her own.

Mr. King had not devoted himself to his two motherless little girls—had not made them his study and delight, and borne them on his thoughts and on his heart day by day, without having learned to read almost every change that passed over them. He noticed Isabel's depression, and though he could not guess the depth, he guessed the nature of her sorrow.

"Isabel," he said, after waiting a little while for her to speak when they were left together; "my child, can you not have Rose's faith in me?"

"I have, papa. It is not that; I am not afraid you will be angry, but I am so sorry to have made you sorry. And Rose, poor little Rose, what have I done to her?"

"Dear child," said her father, "I think you are reproaching yourself too keenly, and even unjustly."

"Oh, no," interrupted Isabel, fearful lest, by taking the blame from her, more should be laid on her sister. "Rose is so honest, so loving. I feel sure

she would never, never have deceived you if I had not done so first."

"You had not deceived me; you had not thought of me in the matter. We must remember truth, even in our own favour. One proof of the difference between your secret and Rose's—When you saw me at home unexpectedly, what did you feel?"

"Oh, so glad," replied Isabel, looking up with her first smile into her father's face.

"And Rose was frightened; her heart could not receive me because it had received something which she knew was contrary to me. Do you understand this?"

"Yes; but Rose. I first gave her the idea of keeping a secret from you."

"The idea, yes; but Rose did not act in the dark; she knew, for you had told her, the reason of your secret, and her own conscience told her how different it was from hers. No; something far stronger than your example was the reason of Rose's fault—a heart left to its own weakness was the source. When I see my little girl yield to temptation and deny the very qualities of truthfulness and affection, which I might have hoped were rooted in her heart, it cannot but cause me deep sorrow and pain; yet even this, which is so distressing, is not without its good, as it is permitted by the Giver of

all good. May we not hope that, learning by experience the weakness and deceitfulness of her own heart, may lead Rose to lay it at the feet of Jesus. May we not trust that by all these ways God is bringing her to himself. In his own good time we shall give thanks for her, the child of many prayers. 'This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us'— 'The word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord God.' Now, for yourself and your secret : in itself it was harmless; nay, done in a right spirit and at a right time, might have been done unto the Lord. You best know how it has been, whether instead it has been in any measure done to yourself, or to your friend; whether it has been allowed to take an undue place in your heart and mind; whether it has, even in your thoughts, supplanted other duties,"

"It has," said Isabel, "all this. I meant at first to do it rightly, but I didn't. I was pleased to have a secret, and pleased to help Mary; and often I forgot to think about Rose, whether she liked to sit waiting for me. And all this has been the consequence. I will never, never have another secret."

Mr. King let her shed a few tears in silence.

"There is one secret," he said presently, "which you may have, and that is the best. It will not be

a secret from me, but one which you may share with many. This secret can be no weight on the heart, it can bring no sorrow and no difficulty; here it is," and taking a little Bible from his pocket, he opened it at the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and pointed to the forty-fourth verse.

Isabel read, " 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.' "

" 'Treasure, the which when a man hath found, he hideth,' " repeated her father. "Shall this be your secret?"

And Isabel answered, "Yes."





## CHAPTER XII.

### LEAVING HOME.

**I**T was evening. Rose was in bed, Isabel had finished her lessons, and was expecting her father. Enjoying these summer evenings, when she could not only wait, but watch for him, she sat beside the open window, while the last rays of gold were lingering on roofs and windows, and the first little star was peeping, with a faint twinkling light, from the calm gray sky, and presently, coming out from the fast gathering darkness, she saw her father.

She thought his welcome not more tender—that could hardly be—but graver than usual; and, when he returned from his nightly visit to Rose, he ate his tea for some time almost in silence.

“When do your holidays begin?” he said at last.

“On Thursday—the day after to-morrow,” replied Isabel.

Another silence. “I have an invitation for you,” said her father, presently.

"An invitation!" exclaimed Isabel, with more of surprise than any other feeling.

"Yes," replied Mr. King, rousing himself from his abstraction. "From your mother's aunt, Mrs. Forrester; your great-aunt. She wishes you to spend a few weeks with her; but you may read what she says," and laying an open letter before her, he pointed to a place.

"'I have taken a cottage in the country for the summer,'" read Isabel, "'and I wish very much that you would send my dear Rosalie's eldest child'—Rosalie, that was mamma's name," thought Isabel. "I suppose that means me; what a funny way of writing; we are papa's children, too." She continued—"to spend some weeks with me. She must be growing a great girl—nearly thirteen years old, and I am anxious to see her. You must remember how fond I was of my poor Rosalie, and I think you will not refuse me this, which I have a right to ask.'" Isabel did not like the letter at all; she had no wish to accept the invitation, or to know more of the writer; besides, Rose was not asked, and Isabel could not conceive of pleasure apart from her.

"I think I must let you go," said her father, perceiving that she made no remark, and guessing the reason. "Mrs. Forrester brought your mother up

for many years ; she was very fond of her, and will be of her children. I have no fears about that."

His words and manner implied that he had about other things, but he did not enter on them then, and seemed rather anxious to show her the advantageous points in her probable visit.

"You will like to see the country—real, real country, as our little Rose says ; and I think the change of air will be good for you, after all your hard study and your other labours. I should not like Rose to be the only rosebud. I think I shall like you to go."

"But Rose," suggested Isabel.

"Yes ; Rose will be left behind. She will not much like that, I am afraid, and you would have enjoyed being together. Yet, I do not know whether I could have allowed her to go."

Isabel's eyes said, "Why?" though she did not speak. Her father answered the look.

"For many reasons, which I will try and explain ; and, as they concern yourself chiefly, I hope you will listen attentively, that you may understand and remember what I am going to say. You have lived so quietly here with me, and have seen so little of anything or any one beyond home, that I fear lest, when you go into the world, much that you see around you may perplex and trouble you, or that,



from very inexperience, you may be led into evil ; your thoughts and wishes may begin to centre around those things which occupy the people with whom you are ; you may take another standing, and look at everything from a point of view different to that which has always been set before you. Now, when I speak of evil, I do not wish you to think unkindly or disrespectfully of your aunt, or indeed of any one with whom you may be thrown ; she is a truly kind person ; as your mother's child, you owe her much love and respect. She will try to make you happy, I am sure, but in her own way, and when anything in that way puzzles or distresses you, there are some words which will explain the difficulty, and will clear your mind of doubtful questions. They are words of the Bible, sad words, which I doubt not you have often read, but with the practical truth of which you have hitherto been little acquainted. In the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians we read, 'All men have not faith.' When anything astonishes you, when anything pains you, when anything tempts you—remember these words."

"Yes," said Isabel ; for her father stopped speaking, and she thought he was waiting for an answer.

"Is my little girl frightened ? Does she feel a shrinking from the trial before her ? She may draw

happier thoughts from the same book—"This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." Will not faith, the gift of God, be stronger than unbelief, which is of the earth, earthy? I do not feel afraid for you, my child. But with Rose it would be different; I could not let her go with the same confidence. You understand my reasons now."

"Yes," replied Isabel.

"And you will not wish for Rose, but will try to be happy. Good is in everything; you must take the good and leave the evil. I was thinking you needed a blow in fresh country air, and wondering how you could have it."

"I would rather"—began Isabel, but she checked herself.

"Rather we should have been together," said her father, guessing her thought; "perhaps we all should; but what we had rather is of no importance; what God appoints, is the only safe and happy way, and we must pray for a subject will. Perhaps you are too much accustomed to lean on me and home influences, or on friends who give you much loving help and counsel. God sees this, though we may not, and he will take his child away from all these, and shut her up unto himself. Don't you say often, when we are here together in the evening, how nice it is to have you all to myself? Why is that?"

"Because I love you."

"And"—said her father. "Do you know what I was going to say?"

"And," replied Isabel, "because God loves us so much, he wants us to give our hearts quite to him, and to trust him altogether. He wants to have us quite to himself."

"With a perfect heart," said Mr. King. "Do you know what that is?"

"A heart given entirely to God."

"Yes; an entire heart. Undivided; no giving of a part to God and a part to other things, but given up wholly to him, and, through him, flowing out to all that is of him. Do you understand this?"

"I think I do," said Isabel.

"This perfect heart is the best safeguard against evil. But we must not spend too much time in conversation; I do not want your aunt to be kept waiting for you longer than I can help. Do you think that, if your school breaks up on Thursday, you could be ready to leave home on this day week?"

"Yes," said Isabel, who had no idea of any particular preparations to be made for the journey.

"And do you not wish to know whereabouts you are going?" asked her father, thinking her tone not very cheerful, and wishing to interest her in the

prospect of the visit. "You are to go to Little Cliff, a pretty cluster of houses, your aunt calls it, about five miles from the nearest town, East Cliff. Won't it be strange to you to see nothing but fields and trees all round you?"

"Are there woods?" said Isabel.

"I think so. Your aunt speaks of its being very picturesque country. She seems, like Rose, fond of the country—doesn't she?"

"Yes."

"Your mother spent several years with her, after the death of her parents; she used to say they were very happy years; Mrs. Forrester is a very kind person, and never was fonder of any one than she was of your mother, so you need not feel shy with her; she will be sure to be kind and affectionate to you, for her sake."

"She is not like mamma," suggested Isabel, half questioning, half asserting, and wondering very much how any one who had loved her mother could be so strange as the writer of that letter must be.

"Not much, I think," replied Mr. King. "Sometimes I fancy Rose is a little like her—Mrs. Forrester has bright eyes and quick ways."

"Rose like Mrs. Forrester?"

Mr. King detected some unpleasant surprise in the tone.

"You must not judge of your aunt," he said, after some hesitation, "from the letter, which I am almost sorry I showed you. My little girl loves and honours her papa as her best and dearest friend—eh?"

"Yes," said Isabel, heartily; "the best papa in the world."

"But every one is not of this opinion, and it is no fault in them to think differently. Your aunt does, for one, and her manner of writing to me is her least attractive way of showing herself. To every one else she is polite and kind." This apology for the letter rather aggravated than mended matters. Any one who slighted and disliked her father—as this explanation implied Mrs. Forrester did—could hope but for a very small place in Isabel's esteem or affection.

"I shall not like her," she said, presently.

"My little girl must try," said Mr. King, gravely. "She must pray God to give her a heart to love her aunt, and she must strive, as a duty, to do so. Our blessed Lord has said, 'Love your enemies,' and Mrs. Forrester is not your enemy, but a very kind friend."

"She is not kind to you."

"Perhaps not; but if she sees my little girl loving and attentive, she will think I have spoken kindly of her, and perhaps some day she may learn

to like even me. But far more important than this, is that she may learn to love the Lord. I don't think, as yet, that she does; and how can she learn it from you, unless you adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour?"

"I will try," said Isabel, subdued. "I shall like her, if she is really like Rose."

"Perhaps you will not perceive the resemblance," said Mr. King, who could not repress a smile, at the thought of his merry little Rose being considered a type of the elderly and somewhat stately great-aunt. "But, while you have been alarmed at Mrs. Forrester, you have forgotten to have a proper awe of Martha. I don't know what she will do to me for keeping you up so late, and she will think it treason on my part to let you go away. You must send her to me when you are in bed."

Martha could not help feeling that Mr. King had a right to send his daughter from him to visit her aunt, if he chose to, but she did what she could, nevertheless, to show her disapproval of the arrangement.

"Poor, dear child!" she said, not shocked at her own rudeness and presumption because she did not actually address these words to her master, but mumbled them audibly to herself, "to be turned out on the world that way!"

"Try not to disturb her mind," said Mr. King. "She already feels some repugnance to the idea of this visit. A timid nestling."

"Hum—hum!" mumbled Martha, not to be appeased by her master's kind forbearance; "and what's to become of Miss Rose, I should like to know."

"I daresay you and I can manage to take care of her."

"That and we can't," said Martha, her favourite and not very polite mode of contradiction; "few's the people that could know how to take the care of her Miss Isabel does; I, for one, could never learn to be so tender and careful like."

"You have often distressed Miss Isabel by telling her of her incapacity in this, her dearest occupation," replied Mr. King, seizing this opportunity of offering Martha a gentle reproof for her many unkind reproaches of Isabel.

"Maybe I have said she wasn't fit, now and then, but I never meant it. I thought, perhaps, it would do her good, lest she should grow proud."

"I think it is a pity you are not more careful always to say what you mean; and, as to doing good, I think, Martha, you must see that God cannot use or bless such means. 'The *wrath* of man worketh not the righteousness of God;' how much

less than *untruth*, which comes from the father of lies !”

Martha was subdued, and attempted no reply.

“I want Miss Isabel to leave as soon as she conveniently can,” continued Mr. King. “Do you think you can have her ready by this day week ?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Martha, resuming a proper demeanour.

“You must get anything she may require. I should wish her to have everything that is suitable while she is with Mrs. Forrester.”

“Miss Isabel will not want anything,” replied Martha, with decision.

“I hope you will be careful to have her well provided with everything that is proper. Mrs. Forrester is accustomed to see everybody well dressed ; she is more particular about it than the people we see here, and I particularly wish that she should find no cause of annoyance in Isabel.”

“She carries her head high,” said Martha, tossing hers very high indeed. “I suppose what Mr. King is satisfied with will please Mrs. Forrester.”

“I think not,” interrupted Mr. King.

“Miss Isabel has all a young lady can want.” persisted Martha ; “two print dresses for each week, besides a white one whenever she needs it ; a very good brown alpaca, if she finds the print cold, and



three Holland jackets, besides a thin cloth cloak, and a good thick one for bad weather. Two good hats, neat enough for any one, I'm sure; and, as to all her clothes, in the whole of it there's not a stitch wanting. I know how to work, thank goodness and my poor, dear grandmother, who set me to my needle almost afore I could run away. You may look at Miss Isabel's things yourself, sir, if you don't think they are fit for any one's company."

"Thank you," replied Mr. King, and Martha understood that the conversation was ended. She left the room, feeling her temper ruffled, yet, if any one had asked her the reason of her dissatisfaction, she would have found it hard to give any, except, perhaps, that Mr. King had slighted himself by supposing any renovation or addition necessary in a wardrobe with which he was satisfied.

Martha's behaviour raised some misgivings in Mr. King's mind, and one day, towards the end of the week, he determined to set them at rest, by handing her kind invitation to inspect Isabel's wardrobe on to Miss Elliot, as being a more competent judge than himself.

"I am afraid that any interference on my part will give dire offence to Martha," said Miss Elliot, in answer to this proposal.

"I think not," said Mr. King. "You can

manage it if any one can, and you would oblige me very much if you would try. I hope Martha will not annoy you; I am afraid she is a little spoiled; but she kept house for me ten years when I was alone, and since then has served me faithfully for fourteen more. You can understand how much I am attached to her; besides, she is so devoted to the children, I feel so easy in leaving them to her care; she is devoted to us all, too much so, for the secret of all her bitterness is that she considers us the heads of creation, and that we do not treat ourselves, nor does any one else treat us as such."

Miss Elliot laughed. "Regard for you, then, is the way to Martha's heart," she said; "I think I shall be able to manage her."

So that afternoon Miss Elliot accompanied her two little pupils to their home. "I intend going into town to-morrow," she said, in explanation of her visit, "and I have come to see whether there is anything I can do for you there."

Martha looked searchingly at her unexpected visitor. "There is nothing I want, thank you ma'am," she replied.

"You will want something for Isabel, will you not? And I might perhaps save you the trouble of a journey into town, which I know you do not like."

"Thank you, you are very kind," said Martha;

"I am sure there is nothing I dislike more than a tramp through them close streets; poison's in every breath you draw. I'm glad Miss Isabel's going to the country, as she *must* go away."

"Yes," replied Miss Elliot, "I hope the change will do her good; but I am afraid it will not do her clothes good. I know what the country is. Are you prepared to see her get through a dozen frocks, and half as many hats in a month?"

"Half-a-dozen hats," exclaimed Martha; "dear heart alive! Half-a-dozen! Why, she's never had but two, and it's all she has now."

"Two new ones?"

"No, but very good. The brown straw, trimmed with a brown ribbon, she wears to school; and a white straw, trimmed with white, that I daresay you have seen her in on Sundays."

"Yes; I have seen it, it is a very pretty hat; but I am sure she will want another. Could you not let her take the brown one for the garden, and get her another for best?"

"Best!" repeated Martha, "That white one has served her for best here. When she's in better company than her papa's, she can wear better clothes; for my part, I have no notion of children's dressing themselves up to please strangers."

Miss Elliot took no notice of this remark.

"Mr. King's little girls," she said, "have always had all they could require, and you would not like Isabel's aunt now to think that you had neglected, or that her father had refused to provide what was necessary."

This was a consequence of her obstinacy, which Martha had not until now contemplated; it somewhat shook her determination, and, after a little more argument, she consented to allow Miss Elliot to provide Isabel with a hat, dress, and cloak, and, she added, returning to a right frame of mind, "If you think of anything else, ma'am, perhaps you would be so good as to get it for her. Mr. King said he wished her to be well provided."

Miss Elliot, astonished at this confidence, thanked Martha, and proceeded to make another request, which, after Martha's expressed opinion of the city air, was a very bold one; but it was acceded to, at last, and the two little girls were invited to accompany Miss Elliot on her expedition.

As may be supposed, they neither of them declined the invitation, and all three thoroughly enjoyed their day. Rose, it is true, took more actual pleasure in the new apparel than her sister, and she experienced a very natural pang when she found that, for the first time in her life, she was not to share Isabel's good fortune.

Miss Elliot's choice met with approval when it was exhibited at home; a very quiet, but pretty little gray hat, a black silk cloak and a gray barège dress, even Martha's severe taste could not be offended.

The reason of their expedition had been its least pleasant feature to Isabel; she still felt some dread of her visit, and when, on the last evening before she left home, she poured out her father's tea, and remembered that she did it for the last time before what seemed to her an immeasurable period, she felt as near to unhappiness as a heart so calm ever could be.

But after tea her father talked with her, not sitting by her side, but resting in his arms. From thence, regret and apprehension fled discomfited, and childlike confidence and gladness took their place.

"Dear little girl," said Mr. King, "I shall miss you to-morrow."

"Yes, and I shall miss you, papa; but,"—with a great effort at cheerfulness,—“I shall soon be back again.”

"I hope so. God grant you may. Is this what keeps away regret at the thought of leaving?"

"Yes," replied Isabel. "Not all though," she added, after a little silence.

"Something better?" said her father. "It is a

very pleasant hope, that of seeing my little girl back again to take care of me; but it is not that which comforts **me** when I let her go from me. I will tell you **something** of what my comfort is; one little verse of God's Word will show it to you. You will **know** then what I **am** thinking of while you are **away** from me, it will remind you of me, and at the same time will make you happy, as it makes me. 'When **he** putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them.' How safe and how happy they must be if Jesus goes before them; if any danger awaits them, Jesus is before them and will bring them through it; if they lift their eyes, Jesus is before them, they look at him. Will my little girl take this verse away in her heart, and let it be her sure source of joy?"

"Yes," said Isabel.

"And now," said her father, "that I have given you a souvenir, can you not give me one?"

"A souvenir?" said Isabel.

"Yes, a keepsake, if you understand that better. Something surer than what you gave me just now, the hope of your quick return."

Isabel was silent for a few minutes. "I have one," she said at last; "a verse too—'For this God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death.'"

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“Thank you, dear child,” said her father; “that is sure indeed, it stretches over every accident ‘for ever and ever.’ All around us we see God. His works shew his power, his love, his greatness, his holiness; we learn more of him, too, in his Word; and while our hearts are filled with wonder at the sight, by faith we can say, ‘This God is our God.’”





## CHAPTER XIII.

### REAL, REAL COUNTRY.

**R**EAL, real country! who could resist its sweet, soothing influence? Certainly not Isabel, though, as she looked from the train-window at the ever-changing expanse of river, wood, and meadow, tears filled her eyes at the thought of the little sister, whose words she recalled, and who would so have enjoyed the sight.

Papa, and Rose, and Martha! They were all very far away, Isabel thought, and every moment widened the distance between her and them, as the train sped past towns and villages, and the July sun rose high and scorching.

The railway-carriage grew hot and dusty, Isabel felt very tired with the mixture of pleasure and sadness, so she leant back, and shutting her eyes from the glare of the sunlight, soon fell asleep.

Her aunt was to send some one to meet her at East Cliff, the last station, and once, when the train stopped, she awoke with a start and a terrible fear



that this might be her destination, and that the guard might have forgotten to call her, though he had promised to do so, and had, until now, been very attentive in his care of her. Just then he appeared, and Isabel inquired if it were East Cliff.

"In half-an-hour, miss. Two more stations," he replied.

Isabel had no more sleep after that. Her heart beat fast, and it needed her father's keepsake, two or three times repeated, to still the doubts that would arise.

A little tremor remained when the train actually stopped before the name East Cliff, printed in great black letters on a white board. A great many people alighted here, and Isabel felt quite at a loss as to how she was to distinguish Henderson, her aunt's maid, for whom she had been directed to ask on her arrival. The guard could not help her in this difficulty; the train began to move. Isabel, standing on the platform, a very small item in the crowd of strangers, felt rather desolate. But there were not many little girls standing alone on the East Cliff platform, and with the additional distinction of the soft brown eyes and curling hair, Henderson had not much difficulty in recognizing her charge.

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"Miss King?" she said; and Isabel answered, "Yes," with great relief.

"This way, if you please," said Henderson, taking the little basket from Isabel's hand, and leading the way to a carriage which was waiting. "Go and find the luggage, Henry," she said to a boy who was standing beside the driver; "What luggage have you got, miss?"

"One large box with a canvas wrapper, and 'King' sewn in scarlet braid upon it, that is all," said Isabel.

"Are you tired, miss?" inquired Henderson.

No, Isabel was not very tired; she enjoyed the fresh air of the country-roads after the close atmosphere of the railway-carriage; she thought Henderson looked very kind and pleasant, and wondered whether really she should see anything in her aunt which would remind her of Rose.

Not very much, Isabel thought, when Mrs. Forrester appeared before her in the porch of a pretty, rustic cottage. After awhile she did see the bright eyes, but what first struck her was her aunt's very upright carriage, handsome dress, and the solemn manner in which she spoke of her to Henderson as Miss King.

Notwithstanding the unaccustomed dignity of this title, Isabel could not help thinking that Henderson

fancied her a baby, and treated her as such, for she was taken up-stairs to a little room near her aunt's, and there required to stand inanimate while her travelling things were taken off, the contents of her trunk examined, and an entire renovation effected in her costume.

"Can you find your way back to the drawing-room, miss, or shall I go with you?" said Henderson, when she had completed these arrangements.

Isabel preferred making her way alone.

"Here you are," said her aunt, when she re-entered the drawing-room; "and here is the tea. I dare say you are hungry. Come and give me another kiss. Are you glad to come and see me?"

"Yes," said Isabel.

"Speak the truth, child. Don't say you are glad to please me. The truth will please me more than anything."

"It is the truth," said Isabel, a little surprised.

Mrs. Forrester, disregarding her tea, fixed her eyes attentively on her little niece. The examination made Isabel very uncomfortable; she tried to get through her slice of bread and butter, but her cheeks felt very hot.

"I suppose you don't like to be looked at?" said Mrs. Forrester. "Well"—as Isabel did not speak—"do you?"

"Not very much," replied Isabel, with a deeper blush.

Mrs. Forrester laughed.

"You need not feel afraid to be seen. You have nothing to be ashamed of. Not like Rosalie, though," she continued, meditatively; "the mouth, perhaps, a little. You are a very good height for twelve. Is Rose as fair as you are?"

"I don't know."

"Not know!" exclaimed Mrs. Forrester. "How can that be?"

"I have never thought about it."

"What an odd child! Please to think about it now, then. I wish to know."

"I think she has a brighter colour," replied Isabel, after a little obedient reflection. "Rose is a great deal more like mamma than I am. I am like papa."

"You need not tell me that; it is plainly to be seen. His *looks* were not to be complained of. We shall see how much further the likeness extends. Pray, how is your education carried on? Do you go to school, or do you teach yourself?"

"I go to school," replied Isabel, gravely, not much liking the manner of this speech.

"That is some chance for you. Have you any friends at school?"

"Not now."

"None! Why, have you no affection? Do you not care for anybody?"

"I am very fond of Miss Elliot."

"Who is that?"

"The lady who keeps our school."

"Nonsense, child! I mean friends of your own age. Don't try to deceive me. You must have made some friends. Who are they?"

"Only one; a little girl who does not go to school any more now."

"Who is she?"

"Her name is Mary Rivers. She is an orphan."

"Of course; but *what* is she? What was her father?"

"He was a lieutenant in the navy. He was drowned last year."

"Hum!" said Mrs. Forrester; "is this the whole of your acquaintance?"

"I know one other little girl," said Isabel presently.

"Well?"

"Her name is Nelly; Nelly Davis. She is blind."

"And her father?"

"He is dead."

"Her mother then?"

"She is a poor woman; she goes out washing, I think."

"What?" exclaimed her aunt, elevating her voice considerably above its usual lady-like pitch; "a washerwoman's child! For your mother's sake, if for nothing else, your father ought to have taken more care of you than that! Hush," she continued, as Isabel was about to reply; "don't tell me any more about your friends. I shall go distracted. You ought to be ashamed to mention such a fact. Have you never been taught proper respect for yourself? You ought to be ashamed of such friends."

"Ashamed?" repeated Isabel.

"Yes, ashamed."

"I couldn't be ashamed of them," said Isabel.

"Couldn't! but you *must*. Why not?"

"What if I saw them in heaven, and remembered that I had been ashamed of them here? Jesus is not ashamed of them. The Bible says, 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren.'"

"Nonsense, child; you do not keep to the subject. I say these are not proper friends for you. Your papa has no end of foolish notions; he always had; and I suppose he has been filling your head with some of them; but you will please to forget them now, and think and do as I tell you."

Forget her papa's notions!—those thoughts and feelings which he had so carefully sought to instil

into her heart ! Isabel could not help feeling indignant.

"Now, I daresay you are thinking what a cross aunt I am, and making up your mind to dislike me ; but I only say this for your own good. I don't want you to be moped to death, as your poor mother was. Come, forgive me, as you know you ought ; and when you have done so, give me a kiss."

Isabel had a little struggle before she could give the required token ; but when it was offered it was done sincerely.

"Now you had better go to bed," said Mrs. Forrester. "Good night, my dear. Ring for Henderson ; she will assist you."

Isabel felt much perplexed by her aunt's mixture of harshness and affection. "All men have not faith," she repeated to herself. "Is that the reason Aunt Forrester says such strange things ?"

The feeling of strangeness made her long for the dear familiar faces and the neat little bed-room so far away. She felt very ready to cry ; but Henderson's entrance put a stop to this inclination. She would put up the texts which used to hang above her own little bed ; that would give her a home-feeling when she lay down.

"Where is my box ?" she asked presently, with this intention.

"Carried away, miss," replied Henderson; "but there is nothing in it."

"Did you unpack it?"

"Yes, miss."

"Did you see two cards with texts written in large letters, and a few books?"

"Yes; I've put them in your aunt's room. Mrs. Forrester gave orders that any books, and such like, you had, were to be carried there for her to see."

"Oh!" said Isabel, in a voice of great dismay.

She was silent for some time, pondering on the best plan to pursue. She felt very unwilling to combat any arrangement of her aunt's, and very uncertain whether she should gain anything if she did so. Having the texts she would give up for that night, but she could not make up her mind to go to bed without reading a few verses in her Bible.

"Could you not bring back my Bible?" she asked at last. "I do not think my aunt could have meant that, when she spoke of books."

"I took one with another," replied Henderson; "but I suppose you may have that one back. But you can't be wanting it to-night, and it's always best to do just as your aunt says. She's goodness itself, but she is very particular about being obeyed exactly. I daresay she'll give you back the books



herself to-morrow. At any rate, you will get the Bible before Sunday."

"Sunday!" repeated Isabel, bewildered. "This is only Tuesday. I shall want my Bible before then. I can't go to bed without reading a little. Can you lend me another, if you do not like to bring mine?"

"I'll try and find one, miss. Say your prayers while I'm gone," said Henderson, as she left the room. She presently returned with a Bible. "Here is mine, miss," she said, "but be as quick as you can, if you please. I am afraid Mrs. Forrester will be wanting me."

"Thank you; you need not wait," said Isabel. "I can put out the candle."

"I must see you into bed," was Henderson's reply; "your aunt particularly desired you should not be left in the room alone with a candle."

Isabel knew it would be of no use to make any protest against this mistrust of her prudence. It was very unpleasant sitting down to read from the strange Bible, with Henderson standing like a monument of patience behind her. At first, Isabel could not fix her attention; but presently the familiar words banished the feeling of strangeness, and, when Henderson left her, she was no longer unhappy or desolate, as she lay repeating her evening hymn in the dark. She had been instructed not to rise in

the morning before Henderson came to her assistance ; but she longed to be up and out of doors as soon as she awoke ; for though blue chintz curtains were closely drawn before the window, they could not shut out the summer light. It was gorgeous weather ; Isabel knew that, without one look at the clear sky ; and shadows, cast by waving trees and fluttering creepers across the curtains, reminded her of the pleasant fact that she was awaking for the first time in her life in the real, real country.

Mrs. Forrester's manner was less trying to her little niece this morning than it had been the evening before, partly because she really wished to win the child's affections, and partly because Isabel herself was earnestly striving in every way to adorn the doctrine of God her Saviour, and thus was carefully avoiding everything which could be a source of annoyance.

"You will like to run out and look about you," said her aunt, after breakfast. "Ring, and Henderson will bring you your hat. Shall she go with you ? or would you prefer finding your way alone ?"

"I should like best to go alone," replied Isabel, making her choice without any difficulty.

Henderson brought her hat, and she opened the glass door which led into the garden. The cool air, the rich green fields and distant woods, wrapped

in floating blue mist, the silent listening of all things to the voice of Nature, were inexpressibly sweet to the town-bred child. She walked slowly down the garden, admiring and wondering at its blaze of July glory. It was not really very large, but, compared with those of Spring Row, it seemed boundless in size and exhaustless in beauty. In front of the drawing-room windows was a lawn, enlivened by two or three flower-beds, gaily bordered with Virginia stock; and some wide-spreading trees threw a welcome shade over the whole. On one side, the garden terminated in a hedge, and beyond were fields; on the other side, a low wall separated it from a companion house and garden; on the third side, a broad gravel pathway led down to a little gate, which opened on the sweetest green lane that Isabel had ever seen.

When she had looked a while at the varied profusion of flowers in the garden, she began to wish for some that she could gather for her own. Sweet, dark wallflower; delicate sprays of cluster roses; bright scarlet geraniums; graceful fuchsia and sweet-scented mignonette, tempted her exceedingly; but she could not venture to appropriate any of these, and, by no means despising the less-cherished wild-flowers, she opened the gate and looked out into the lane, to see what its hedges and high green banks might offer.

She had delighted in the garden, but what now met her eyes seemed, to her simple taste, almost more lovely.

The tiny white harebell, shining out from the dark-green of the bank, was of so pure and fragile a beauty, that Isabel hesitated to disturb any of the delicate blossoms from their soft pillow of moss. A few wild geraniums met with less consideration, and were gathered. The long garlands of convolvulus, which hung above her head, recalled that pleasant day in the fields not long past, and brought a wish that Rose could be with her now, to share in the sights which were making her so happy. She thought she must gather the convolvulus for remembrance sake; but the long clinging stalk was mysteriously twisted round the thorny branches which formed the hedge, and this, added to her fear of crushing the lowly harebells, in her desire to reach more highly-placed beauties, made her attempts, though patiently continued for some time, utterly fruitless.

She thought herself alone; but all this time she had been watched with much interest from behind the gate of the neighbouring garden.

"Shall I help you?" said the watcher at last, coming forward.

Isabel turned, and saw a boy apparently a year or two older than herself. She liked his manner of

speaking, and was attracted by his good-humoured and rather clever though not very handsome-looking face : for his mouth was large, perhaps from its constant habit of smiling ; the nose, too, rather inclined to breadth ; his hair was certainly dressed after no European fashion, though it might have been the pride of a Red Indian's heart ; and his clothes gave very evident proof of the ill effects of country life on wearing apparel.

"Pray, don't be afraid of me," said this unexpected companion, as Isabel stood looking rather shyly at him, and hesitating as to whether she should accept his offer. "It's no manner of use. No one ever minds me. Wish they did, though, some of them. Dreadful shame, isn't it ? Granny doesn't care that for me !"—with an expressive gesture of his thumb and forefinger. "What do you want to get ? Some of that convolvulus ? Let me help you."

"Thank you," said Isabel. "It is so twisted with the brambles that I could not pull it down."

"So much the better for you. Don't you see, if you had been strong enough and tall enough to seize it well, the stem would have come, but the flowers would have been knocked off by the thorns ? I'll get it for you, though, in no time ;" and, producing a sturdy, well-worn pocket-knife, he cut off

bramble and flowers together. "You're Mrs. Forrester's niece, aren't you?" he said presently, while he worked with great care at freeing the garland from its twist of thorns. "I watched you come down her garden and into the lane just now. I knew you were expected; and I've heard your name, too. Isabel, isn't it?"

"Yes; Isabel King."

"And my name's Philip Knight. King and Knight—isn't that odd? Knights always wait on kings; so I must wait on you. And here is your wreath."

"Thank you. How very beautiful!"

"Yes, it's pretty," replied Philip; "but so slender! I hardly liked to touch it; for I dislike to spoil a thing, and I'm sure to do it if it isn't pretty strong. But won't you have some more flowers? Why didn't you gather these? You could have got them without any trouble;" and he stooped towards the harebells.

"Wait," said Isabel, laying a restraining hand on his. "I didn't like to gather those, they looked so fragile. The one I picked drooped its head and withered almost as soon as I touched it. I can't bear to kill them."

Philip laughed.

"You wicked little thing!" he said. "You don't

like to kill the flowers, but you nearly made me run the knife into myself with laughing at your odd speech. Fancy being afraid to touch the flowers, if you want them ! You don't suppose they're alive ?”

“ They are alive,” said Isabel.

“ Oh, alive in a way, I suppose ; but not as we are : they can't feel. But as you are so sensitive, I can gather them for you, and keep them alive too. Just pick a few sprigs of this fresh moss, and lay the little things upon it ; they keep fresh then.”

Philip's brown and not very slender fingers went tenderly to work upon the moss and harebells.

“ You want something to lay them in, now,” he said. “ Have you a basket ?”

“ No,” replied Isabel. “ But, here,” she said, taking off her straw hat, and lost to every sense but admiration of the flowers ; “ this will do instead. Lay them in here.”

“ Taking off your hat !” exclaimed Philip ; “ and in this sun ! I'm sure your aunt wouldn't like that. Why, you'll spoil your—what d'ye call it ? Your—pink and white,” he said, touching his cheeks.

“ Complexion ?” suggested Isabel.

“ That's it—complexion. Can't boast of the article myself, you see ; so I forget its name.”

"Oh, it will not hurt me," said Isabel, still holding out her hat for the harebells.

"Really," said Philip, "you must put it on. Don't you know it's very dangerous to be in the sun bareheaded? You might get a sunstroke."

"What, here?" said Isabel.

"Here," replied Philip, giving the top of his head a not very gentle touch; "and lose your senses, and I don't know what, besides."

Isabel put on her hat.

"I didn't know," she said, with some disappointment, "that such things could happen to one except in very hot places. I thought in the country one could go about as one liked."

Philip shook his head solemnly. He knew very well that, though in the country, he could not do the half of what he liked.

"You don't wear a hat," said Isabel.

"I do wear one," said Philip, feeling among his tumbled hair for the missing article. "I came out with it this morning, but it gets left behind on the way. See, though, I have arranged your moss and flowers on this broad leaf. Carry them into the house, and lay them in a saucer. Keep the moss damp, and they will not be killed directly."

"Thank you. Do you know what they are called?"



"Harebell. Have you never seen any before?"

"No; I have never seen anything before—none of these beautiful things," added Isabel, seeing Philip's look of amazement. "I have lived in a town always."

"Oh, but that's much finer."

"Oh no!" said Isabel, earnestly.

"Then you are glad you have come here?"

"Yes, very," said Isabel.

"So am I—ever so glad," said Philip.

And with this farewell they parted.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### A KING AND KNIGHT.

**T**HE remainder of that day did not belie the promise of pleasure given by the morning. Isabel wrote a long letter to her father; and a little one, carrying a large amount of love, to Rose. She took a walk in the pleasant lanes with her aunt, and learned to know and understand her better. She made friends with the cat—a gray, soft-coated, but rather stiff and hard-hearted matron, who long repelled all the advances so tenderly and respectfully offered, but was at last won by the saucerful of new milk which Isabel brought with her own hands.

“Pussy, you are not worth much,” said Isabel, when confidence between her and the cat had been effected, “if you only come for what you can get.”

“It is not cats only who do that,” said Mrs. Forrester, answering this remark; perhaps because puss could not, except by her coaxing way of rubbing against her new-made friend, and her purr of thanks

and apology. "You will meet with plenty of people who only come for what they can get."

"Have you seen people do that?" said Isabel.

"Often."

"It makes you sorry, then? You don't care for them?"

"Of course not."

"Poor pussy!" said Isabel; "you don't know any better, so I must love you. But," she continued, turning from the cat, and looking up into her aunt's face, "suppose it was somebody whom you wanted very much to love you, but he wouldn't and wouldn't, until he wanted something from you, and could not do without you; would you still love him at last?"

"I do not know. I think I should not care much about such a person."

"But we ought," said Isabel; "it is God's way. Isn't it?"—for Mrs. Forrester made no answer.

"I do not understand what you mean, child; and I think you don't quite know what you are talking about."

"I was thinking," said Isabel, speaking slowly, as if the thoughts were coming from very far off, "that when any person puts off coming to God and loving God, when God loves him, and calls him, and wants to make him happy, God might leave off

wanting him to come, if He were like us ; and when any one came just at last, because they felt how dreadful it was to die without Jesus, and were afraid of all their sins, God might say, ' No, you are only coming for what you can get.' But he receives them directly, and doesn't remember all the time they kept away from him."

" How do you know ?" said Mrs. Forrester, in her sharp matter-of-fact voice.

But Isabel forgot the voice, she thought the question so strange.

" I know it," she repeated, lifting a face full of assurance to her aunt.

" But how ?"

" Oh, as I know everything—it is in the Bible."

" Where ?"

" All through the Bible we read of God's love to us, when we do not deserve it at all ; but I was thinking particularly of one verse in John and one in the Psalms."

" What verses ?"

" ' Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out ;' and ' Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.' "

" Then you think it is just as well if we put it off till the last ?"

" Oh no !" said Isabel, rising from her seat on

the carpet in her earnestness. "And we cannot know when the last is."

Mrs. Forrester made no answer : perhaps the child's words were finding a way into her heart.

The flowers seemed all new to Isabel when she took her walk the next morning. The dew was heavy upon them ; and, waving and glistening in the summer sunshine, they seemed to invite her to a fresh examination of their charms.

Something else, however, claimed her attention at the same time. Philip's face just appearing, his chin resting on the wall, his eyes twinkling with interest and fun, and his locks in their usually dishevelled condition, presented new wonders, as well as the flowers. Besides, he was more urgent in his calls upon her attention.

"Come here ! come here !" he said. "Where were you all yesterday afternoon ?"

"Out with my aunt."

"Did you like it ?"

"Oh, very much. It was lovely."

"With her ? Such a dragoness ! She is enough to spoil any fields."

Isabel was rather surprised by the plainness of this remark, and said nothing.

"Do you like her ?" continued Philip.

"Yes. I do not know her very well yet."

"Well, when you know her, you won't; you'll be afraid of her."

"I think not; and papa says I ought to try and love her."

"And if you can't?"

"But I can try," said Isabel.

"You are funny," laughed Philip. "I suppose you never got into a scrape in your life. How are the harebells?"

"Very fresh and pretty."

"Still? Are not you tired of them?"

"Oh, I should never be tired of them!"

"I like flowers well enough," said Philip, "but I like fruit better; there's some use in that. Your aunt hasn't much fruit in her garden; we have lots. Have you seen our peach-tree?"

"No."

"Of course not; how should you? You haven't been into our garden. Will you come?"

"I do not think I may."

"Well; it is just where you are standing, against our side of the wall. Covered!—such soft, rosy peaches!"

"How pretty it must be!" exclaimed Isabel.

"I wish I could see it; I never saw peaches growing."

"Never! Then you must see these. Go a little way along by the wall, until you find a nitch where

a stone has dropped ; there are plenty in this tumble-down old place. I tell granny she and the walls are one as firm as the other, and they will all come to a crash together some day."

"Oh, Philip!" said Isabel, in a shocked voice.

"It's true. But have you found a broken place?"

"Here is one."

"Well, just put your foot in it and give me one hand; hold fast to the wall with the other, and we'll soon have you at the top."

"But do you think I may?"

"Oh yes; there can be no harm in it, only don't tear your frock if you can help it. Now!"

Isabel did as she was directed, and a dexterous pull from Philip brought her to the top of the wall, where, hanging rather insecurely, she beheld the tree. Peaches had, until now, been presented to her view only as tightly packed in square wooden boxes, often with their soft contour defaced and their velvety skin bruised; these long branches, with their ripe, luxurious, richly-coloured fruit appearing in its fresh perfection from among the dark glossy leaves, were indeed a new sight to Isabel.

"Oh, how beautiful!" was on her lips, but her footing gave way, and, amid a rattle of stones and an ominous crash, Isabel slid to the ground.

Philip was on the top of the wall in a moment.

"What have you done?" he exclaimed, looking, with a face of extreme consternation, at a shattered forcing frame into which the fragment of stone had fallen.

Isabel looked too, but in trouble too great for speech. She tried not to give way to tears, but her breath came and went quickly, and the eyes fixed on the ruins were very dim indeed. Philip saw and shared her distress, which he attributed to fear of her aunt's displeasure; and certainly some dread of the confession she would have to make, and misgivings as to the reception it might meet, did mingle with Isabel's feelings, but far more she grieved at the thought that she had given her aunt cause for complaint, and that her heedlessness would bring dishonour on the name she bore.

"I'm very sorry," said Philip; "I wish, I'm sure, I had done it myself, for it was mostly my fault, but perhaps Mrs. Forrester will not notice it—she does not come this way much."

"I must bring her to see it," said Isabel.

"Nonsense! You shan't do that, and get all the blame when it was half my fault."

"I must," was again Isabel's reply.

"Well," said Philip, after a moment's reflection, "if you must tell—and you seem to have made up your mind to it—say I broke the glass."



"Oh, Philip! tell a story?—and of you?"

"It will be more true than to say you did it, for you never would have thought of climbing the wall if I had not put you up to it. Do, now; I shan't mind the scolding—I'm accustomed to it."

"You are very kind," said Isabel: "I am sure you mean kindly, but I couldn't do it, and I do not mind the blame—not much, I mean."

"Don't you?" said Philip, looking keenly at her; "then what is the matter?"

"I am sorry," said Isabel; "aren't you sorry when you have done mischief, Philip?"

"Well, I don't know. Sometimes, I suppose; not if people get in a rage."

"Not sorry?" repeated Isabel; "oh, Philip!"

"Boys aren't the same as girls," said Philip, in explanation; "they are nothing like so timid."

"But everybody ought to be sorry and afraid to do wrong," said Isabel, earnestly.

"Afraid!" repeated Philip, with some scorn; "a boy afraid of a little punishment!"

"It is not a little punishment," replied Isabel; "it is very, very great."

"What?"

"Don't you know, Philip, the punishment of sin? Death?"

Philip stood a moment in speechless amazement.

"I never!" he said at last. "Are you always thinking of that? No wonder you are afraid."

"I am not afraid," said Isabel, quietly.

"Not afraid! I should be, but I never think of it. I couldn't bear to. But you *must* be afraid."

"No," repeated Isabel.

"Why?"

"Have you never read the Bible, Philip? Haven't you read that Jesus died instead of us, that he took away all our sin that we might live in heaven, and be happy and holy for ever?"

"Where does it say that?"

"Oh, many, many verses tell of it."

"Say some."

Isabel fixed her grave, earnest eyes on Philip's face, as she repeated,—"'He'—that means Jesus—'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.'"

"Are you sure, when it says 'us,' and 'we,' it really means us?"

"Yes."

"What! you and me?"

"Yes," said Isabel again—she was silent for

a while searching for a proof of her assertion, presently she spoke again—" 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning, that *we*, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.' "

"Oh," said Philip, "I thought the Bible only spoke about people in the ancient times; I never thought parts were written to us ourselves."

"It is all for us," said Isabel. "Do read it."

"Perhaps I will," said Philip. "It is queer you should be thinking so much about it, while I seem to do very well without."

"You can't, Philip; you cannot do at all without it. Now, I must go and tell aunt what I have done."

Philip said no more. He sat for some time on the wall, pondering Isabel's words, as he watched her go back to the house in search of her aunt.

Isabel, too, was so much occupied in wondering at and pitying Philip, that she forgot half her dread of Mrs. Forrester, and the very grave face with which she appeared at the drawing-room door was but in part attributable to the broken frame.

"You have come in early to-day," said Mrs. Forrester. "Did you not like the garden? It is very hot. I daresay you are tired."

"I did not come in because I was tired," replied Isabel. "I have done some mischief in the garden ;

I am very sorry, but I met with an accident and broke a glass frame."

"What kind of an accident? Did you fall?"

"Not exactly." Isabel hardly liked to tell the stately Mrs. Forrester where she had been when she slipped; the top of the wall seemed such a much more improper place when remembered in the drawing-room than when seen in the garden.

Mrs. Forrester disliked hesitation, and put another question, sharply, "What were you doing?"

"I was trying to look over the wall. I put my foot on a loose stone, which rolled down with me and broke the glass."

"You should not have been near the wall, climbing about and trying to look at what does not concern you! I am surprised at you; it was the last thing I should have expected of you, for you do not look like a romp; but there is no knowing what is in you. I never could make your father out, and I suppose I shall have the same trouble with you."

Isabel stood silent, with eyes downcast, and feeling very uncomfortable.

"I will not say anything more about it, as it is the first time," continued Mrs. Forrester, seeing that her little niece was really sorry, and being, I am afraid, rather glad to find that Mr. King's daughter could meet with accidents like other children.

"Come here; you may give me a kiss as you have spoken the truth. You remembered what I said the first evening, I see," she added, as Isabel walked forward to give the permitted embrace.

There was still some pride in Isabel, which could not endure that her aunt should think she had first taught her the importance of truth. She did not like to say what really was the case, that her aunt's words had had no share in influencing her confession, yet she could not help wishing to make Mrs. Forrester understand that it was a habit long ago derived from those notions of her father's which she had been told to shun.

"I always tell papa everything," she said.

Mrs. Forrester perceived what this speech was intended to convey.

"Don't be obstinate, child," she said. "You may go back to the garden, and take care you do not meet with any more accidents."

Isabel went out again. She wished to be alone a little while, so she walked under the shadow of the great trees, where she knew Philip could not see her; but presently, remembering that he might be anxious to hear the result of her confession, she went towards his usual post of observation, but he was not to be seen. She waited for him a long time, and was beginning, at last, to fear lest their

late serious conversation had frightened him away, when the garden door was cautiously pushed open a little way, and Philip's face, brimful of amusement and mystery, appeared in the aperture.

Isabel ran towards him.

"Well," he said, in a kind of half whisper, "how did you fare?"

"Very well," replied Isabel.

"Wasn't the dragoness angry?"

"Philip, you must not speak so of her. I cannot talk to you if you do. She was very kind."

"Come out into the lane," was Philip's rejoinder; "come, do; I want you." As Isabel hesitated, he led the way, and she followed him.

"You couldn't see the peaches properly, so you must eat these." He took up a leaf full of green-gages which lay on the grass, and offered them to her.

"Thank you," said Isabel; "I would rather not take any."

"You must," repeated Philip; "I picked them on purpose for you. Come, now, if you don't take them I shall think you are still angry with me for getting you into a scrape."

This weighty argument succeeded. Isabel took a green-gage and seated herself in the shady nook under the hedge which Philip pointed out to her. He sat down beside her.

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"Aren't they beauties?" he said, with a little laugh.

Isabel was astonished to see how much the fruit seemed to delight him. He seemed hardly able, at last, to contain his ecstasy.

"There," he said, when the last had been disposed of, "did you like them?"

"Very much, thank you," replied Isabel; but she was a little surprised at her friend, and would rather he had offered her flowers.

"Weren't they cooling this hot day?" he continued. "And after my work, too. Oh, what a lark I have had!"

"A lark?" repeated Isabel, not understanding the term.

"Yes; fun, if you like. Why," he said, breaking into another fit of laughter, "what a sell for old Matthew! And your innocent face kills me!"

Isabel began to perceive some mystery which she could not comprehend. "What do you mean?" she said. "Who is old Matthew? What are you talking about?"

"Stop," he said; "I'll explain, if you won't kill me with laughing."

"What is the matter?" said Isabel again. "I wish you would not laugh so. You are very strange; I don't see anything to laugh at."

"You will," Philip managed to say, "when you hear ; and old Matthew will laugh the wrong side of his mouth by-and-by."

"Who is Matthew?"

Philip, who really wished not to vex his little friend, made an effort and recovered his gravity. "An old man," he replied, "who lives with his daughter in that little white cottage along the lane. Do you see it?"

"Yes."

"Well, while you were gone in, where do you think I went?"

"I do not know."

"Of course not ;" Philip laughed again. "Nobody does but me ; but I'll tell you. It's such a joke ! I was tired of the garden, so I went along the lane, and there, in the shade of his porch, was old Matthew fast asleep. I just whistled close to his ear to try him, but he never moved. Oh, ho, granny, I thought, this is the way you keep house while the folks are at work in the fields. I'll teach you to watch better. I thought it would be great fun to make him think, when he awoke, that a thief had been in his house ; so I just leaned over him, and as gently as possible unlatched the door, and there on the table I saw a plate of green-gages. What a fright he'd have, I thought, if I



carried them away. He'd go counting all his things, to see what else the thief had taken. And he's dreadfully afraid of his daughter; she'll give it to him when she comes in I know. The old man's legs were rather in the way of getting into the kitchen; but I cleared them and came back with the green-gages. Weren't they good? First rate! Eh, Matthew? I hope you and your daughter enjoyed your fine fruit."

"You took his green-gages?" said Isabel, but half comprehending this tale.

"Yes; and you and I ate them."

"Ate them! The old man's fruit? Oh, Philip, you stole them?"

"Don't pull such a long face. He'll do very well without them."

"Oh, Philip!" exclaimed Isabel, "I never thought it of you; and I have been eating them! I wish I had not done it. I wish you had not brought them."

"It was only for fun."

"It is not fun; it is wrong. I ought not to have eaten them; I never knew but what it was your fruit, when you offered it to me."

"I know you did'nt. That was what made me laugh to see you sitting there so good and innocent, eating old Matthew's fruit."

Isabel could make no reply; she was shocked

above measure at her friend, and, exceedingly grieved, she sat with her head drooped, looking sorrowfully at the green bank, the sight of which had yesterday made her so happy. Two tears fell slowly on the little unconscious flowers; Philip saw them; they astonished him; he was as much perplexed by Isabel as she was by him.

"Do you really mind so much?" he said; then, after a long silence, in his very gravest voice—"Do you feel afraid, again?"

Isabel made no answer; she sat meditating on the best means of repairing the mischief, and had resolved on paying a visit herself to Matthew.

"I am very sorry."

"Where are you going?" asked Philip.

"I am going in," replied Isabel.

Philip did not ask her to stay; he began to feel sorry for having vexed her; the deception of old Matthew, and the trouble it would cause him, he did not mind; indeed, he still enjoyed the thoughts of it, but he wished that he had not played Isabel the trick, for he really liked her, though he thought her very strange.

Isabel went away up-stairs to her little room, and watched from her window till she saw Philip re-enter his garden and shut the door; she did not wish him to know of the visit she purposed paying to

Matthew, lest he should prevent it ; she hoped, too, that she might not meet her aunt or Henderson on her way out of the house, and when she found herself once more in the lane alone, she felt relieved by the thought that her first step had been taken without hindrance.

The second was less easy. Isabel hardly knew how to present herself in the old man's cottage, she being a total stranger to him, and he to her ; yet she felt it a duty that must be accomplished, and, though with a beating heart and changing colour, unlatched the wicket gate and walked with a firm step and quiet resolute face up the garden pathway and into the porch. The old man, but just awake, sat there enjoying the shade of his honeysuckle and clematis, while he admired the bright sunlight which had tempted all his flowers to unclothe their petals and show their sweet faces. The flowers and fruit in his little bit of ground were a source of great pleasure to the lonely and infirm old man. The greater part of every fine day he would spend enjoying what he called their company, in the distance, or now and then, with the aid of his stick, walk round his domain to examine them more nearly. He was very much astonished in the midst of his quiet contemplation to see a little girl open his gate and walk straight up to his door.

"Daughter's out," he said, making a feeble effort to rise in honour of the unexpected visitor.

"Are you Mr. Matthew?" asked Isabel; but her low shy voice missed the old man's ear; she had to repeat the question—

"I came to see you, if you are Mr. Matthew."

"Me, mum? Yes; I'm old Matthew; Matthew Hardy, mum."

"I am very sorry," began Isabel, "I have eaten your fruit. I did not know, then, it was yours."

The old man looked up at her. Isabel saw from his expression that he had not understood, which was hardly surprising. She tried to be more explicit next time.

"Philip Knight found you here asleep just now."

"Yes; I does nap off now and then. It's lonesome like when daughter's out, and I'm getting old. Philip Knight?" he repeated, recalling Isabel's words. "Ah, I know him. But you ain't belonging to him, be ye?"

Matthew had a great horror of Philip's superfluous love of fun and mischief, which had caused him many a moment of discomfort before now, and he thought him quite unworthy of anything so quiet and gentle as this new acquaintance seemed to be.

"I do not belong to him," replied Isabel; "but I

was out with him this morning. He had been here while you were asleep, and to play you a trick he opened your door and took away some green-gages which were on the table. Go into your house, you will see that they are gone."

The old man did as he was told, he had been well trained to obedience by his daughter. The sight of the empty plate, coupled with Philip's name, did more to enlighten his mind as to what had happened than all Isabel's explanations.

"Thank you, mum, for coming to tell me," he said. "I wish I weren't so feeble, I'd be after him and catch him."

This vindictive speech rather frightened Isabel; but she bravely continued her story.

"Philip brought the green-gages to me, and we have eaten them; I am very sorry; I did not know they were yours then, but he told me afterwards, and I have come to pay you for them." She took her purse from her pocket. "Will a shilling be enough to pay for them?" she added, as Matthew did not speak, taking out one and laying it on the table. She had no idea of the price of fruit, and Matthew was equally ignorant. "Daughter" kept all the accounts, but the sight of the money assisted his comprehension.

"'Twasn't you," he said; "'twas that young lad,

Knight. He's a bad boy ; but you are welcome to the fruit."

"Oh no," replied Isabel ; "I would rather pay for it. Please take the money."

Matthew at last took the shilling which Isabel pushed towards him, and stood shifting it uneasily from one hand to the other. He felt very uncomfortable, not knowing what to say to the child, and, bewildered by her presence, his thoughts recurred to Philip, whom he considered as the cause of his present embarrassment.

"That boy," he said ; "never mind, mum, he'll get the worst of it some day."

"I think he did not mean to be unkind," said Isabel, fearing that she, in her thoughts, had been hard upon her friend. "He only thought to amuse himself, and forgot how it would tease you."

"Tease !" repeated Matthew, catching this word, but misunderstanding the rest of the speech ; "he's a dreadful tease is Philip Knight, but he'll get the worst of it some day. I know he will. I ain't heard preaching and read my Bible regular to no purpose ; there's a judgment coming for them as despises old folk ; he'll be old and helpless himself one day, and then others will despise him, and he deserves it too."

Isabel was much pained. This old man, with so

little life left in him, so surely approaching the end of his sojourn on earth, so near the time of his appearing before God, with thoughts so contrary to God's love and grace. She felt she could not go away, and, even by her silence, give assent to such feelings.

"I hope Philip will not get what he deserves," she said, raising her voice and speaking distinctly, that the old man might catch her words.

He heard and understood. He was always brighter at the end than at the beginning of a conversation.

"Not?" he said, looking inquiringly at the resolute little speaker; "he will though; we shall all get what we deserve some day. Ain't you read your Bible?"

"Yes," replied Isabel; "but it tells us something better than that."

"Eh?" said the old man. "But it do tell mine somewheres. I can't read it for myself now, my eyes is gone;" but he brought the book and laid it on the table.

Isabel spoke again presently.

"If God looked at what we deserve, he could never take us to heaven."

"No; that's it!" exclaimed Matthew. "The lad will get what he deserves some day."

"I am not speaking of Philip. You and I ; God could not take us to heaven if he were to give us according to what we deserve ; but he does not ; he has a better way ; here, in the Bible, he tells of it."

Matthew's attention was arrested. "In the Bible?" he said, opening it.

Isabel prayed for help and guidance, a short, silent prayer, but powerful and prevailing through faith. Then she turned to the First Epistle to Timothy and read, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Isabel read very slowly ; the old man seemed to hear and understand, but he remained silent.

"Philip Knight is a sinner ; so am I ; so are we all ; but it is sinners that Jesus Christ died to save. It is sinners who have been saved by Jesus who will be in heaven." She left the Bible open. "I must go home now," she said presently. "Good-bye, Matthew."

He was still pondering the words which had been read. "The Bible is true," he said, slowly. "I'll put a mark in there ;" and Isabel left the house.

As she walked along the lane, on her way home, she could not help fearing that something of Matthew's feelings towards Philip had been harboured in her heart when she had left him in the lane,



and she was not sorry to see him again looking out at the door, for she wished to tell him that she was not angry. She forgot that this would lead to the discovery of her visit. Philip was much astonished to see her out again, and his first question was, "Where have you been?"

Isabel told him.

"Now, I never thought you would have done that. I meant to have gone to the old man myself, and given him something instead of his fruit. And now you have been before me; what made you?"

"I could not eat his fruit and say nothing about it."

"I am really sorry I vexed you," said Philip. "I did not think you would mind this, for you had not done any harm, and it will not hurt the old man. I can take him plenty more fruit."

"I did not so much mind," replied Isabel, "his losing the fruit, as letting him think that we had stolen it."

"Bless you!" exclaimed Philip. "He would never think you had stolen. But I don't understand now," he continued presently, "why you are unhappy. You said just now you were not afraid, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well then, if you are not afraid, if you really

do feel sure that you will not be punished for anything, what makes you mind every little thing so much?"

Isabel was roused from her abstraction. "Oh, Philip," she said earnestly, "cannot you understand? Jesus bore all our sins, so we are not afraid; but if we really believe this, can we bear to add one more to the number which was laid upon him, can we take pleasure in what caused him so much suffering?"

Philip was silent for some time and very grave.

"I am sorry," he said at last, "I didn't know you felt so. I thought as you were not afraid, you would not mind. Does the Bible say anything about that?"

"Yes," said Isabel. "'Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?'"

"Do you learn everything from the Bible?" asked Philip.

"All the best things."

"I think I'll read it," said Philip.





## CHAPTER XV.

### AN INVITATION.

**I**SABEL was met by Henderson as she was re-entering the house.

"I have been looking for you, Miss King," she said. "Your aunt wants you. Give me your hat to put away, and go straight to her in the drawing-room; she's not best pleased that you've been away so long, and nowhere to be found."

"She will ask where I have been," thought Isabel with some dismay, as, entering the drawing-room, she stood before her aunt.

"My dear child," was that lady's greeting, with some excitement, "what has happened to you? Where were you, that Henderson could not find you?"

"I was in the lane."

"What ever made you think of going there? Was not the garden large enough for you?"

"Yes, aunt."

"Then what gave you the idea of going into the lane?"

"I went there first to gather flowers."

"Went out of the garden to gather flowers?" Mrs. Forrester laughed. "But sit down. Were not my flowers good enough for you?"

"Too good," said Isabel; "but I did not know I might take them."

"You are the oddest mixture of boldness and bashfulness that ever I met with! You come into my drawing-room on purpose to tell me that you have been climbing on the wall and breaking my frames, and yet you do not dare to gather one little flower! Ridiculous! Remember, if you please, that while you are with me what is mine is for you too."

"Thank you, aunt," said Isabel; "and may I really gather those beautiful flowers in the garden?"

"Really; can you not believe it?"

"You are very kind;" the tone was almost of surprise.

There was silence. When Mrs. Forrester spoke again, her manner was softened.

"Do you remember your mother, Isabel?"

"Oh, yes."

"You are not like her; I wish you were; yet I would be content with you as you are, if only you

would resemble her in this one thing. She loved me. Until your father came, we never differed; but even afterwards, though in so many things she changed, in this, never; she loved me through it all. Will not you?"

"Yes," said Isabel,—a yes that came from her heart. Her aunt's unwonted softness, and the tender recollection of her mother, had touched her, almost to tears. Her thoughts were busy too, wondering how it was that, although the two had been so strongly attached, Mrs. Forrester had never visited her mother, even in her last illness. She could not refer the question to her aunt, but she determined to speak of it to her father.

"Where are your flowers?" asked Mrs. Forrester, presently.

"I have not any to-day."

"No flowers! What were you doing all that time then?"

Isabel did not answer at once; she was very unwilling to relate what had taken place, and so to inculcate Philip, towards whom she felt sure no leniency would be shown.

"Were you alone?" asked her aunt.

"Not all the time."

"Whom were you with?"

"Philip."

"Philip?" repeated Mrs. Forrester. "What! the boy next door? Mrs. Knight's grandson? Is his name Philip? How came you to know?"

"He told me so."

"Have you been making acquaintance with him?"

"Yes. He saw me in the lane yesterday, and came out to me."

"Then you should have gone in. He is not at all a fit companion for you; such a wild, common boy. Take care you do not speak to him again."

"Not speak to him?"

"No, never. Do you understand? you are never to speak to him again."

"Yes," said Isabel, though with great regret. "Not if I can help it;" for she foresaw that Philip would not tamely or silently give up the new amusement which he seemed to derive from her company.

"You *must* help it. You know your father's odd notions are to be laid aside. I will not have you making a friend of every person you see. I think though it would be safer, and would make it easier for you, if you were to keep to the garden. Do not go into the lane any more, and you will not want to now; you may gather as many roses and geraniums as you like, and as often as you like."

"Thank you, aunt," said Isabel again. She tried to be grateful, but just now she felt as if she would

have preferred the wild-flowers and the "wild boy," in whom she had begun to take an interest that was not merely a passing amusement. "Oh, I am not being loving to my aunt as papa said I should," she said presently, to herself; and she made a great effort to accept her favour graciously. "May I gather you a nosegay?" she said at last; "your vase is empty."

Mrs. Forrester seemed pleased. "Do, dear," she replied. "The best flowers you can find."

Isabel went on her errand. A new wave of love and tenderness towards her aunt seemed to flow over her heart with every flower she cut; when she returned Mrs. Forrester seemed lost in profound meditation; she hardly spoke, though she watched with pleased interest while the arrangement of the flowers went on.

"I am afraid you will be dull," she said at last.

"Oh no, aunt," replied Isabel, heartily. "I am never dull."

"Not even sitting here with me, and away from Rose?"

"Away from Rose!" the thought did send a moment's longing into her heart, but she spoke truly when she said, "I like to be here."

"Even without your sister?"

"Yes."

"I think you speak the truth," said Mrs. Forrester, fixing her eyes on her niece's face. "But would you not like to have her here?"

"Have Rose with her!" the very idea made Isabel's heart leap with pleasure; but just then the recollection of her father's words concerning his unwillingness to send his little girl from him came across her, and made her pause.

"I should like it," she said at last; "but I do not think she may come."

"Why not?"

"Papa would not let her, I think. He does not like her to go away from him."

"Does he think I could not take care of her?" asked Mrs. Forrester, with some displeasure. "I did think at first that two of you would be too much for me, so I only invited one; but now that I see you are such a wise, quiet little girl, and give so little trouble, I think I could manage Rose too."

"Rose is not very quiet," said Isabel, hoping to dissuade her aunt, and thus avoid the vexed question.

But she was disappointed.

"I am glad of it," replied Mrs. Forrester. "I do not want two such odd little girls. Besides, I fancy you must have some managing power; cannot you manage Rose?"

"She does not want much managing," said Isabel,



forgetting all but the desire to uphold her sister's character; "she is very good generally, and so loving; she will do anything for any one she loves."

This warm, impulsive, easily led nature was the very reason of Mr. King's unwillingness to let Rose leave home. Isabel perceived this when her aunt replied, "Then I will have her by all means. She shall learn to love *me*, and to do anything for *me*."

Isabel made no reply; she could not say that this was just what her father would disapprove, and yet she could not assent to her aunt's proposal.

"Bring my portfolio," said Mrs. Forrester; she seemed delighted at the prospect of having a niece who would maintain her own thoughts and ways less steadily than did Isabel. Not that she could complain of anything, even in her—Isabel's submission in word and deed was irreproachable—but Mrs. Forrester knew, by the look of the quiet eyes, that no reproach or raillery, no attraction she could hold out, had yet been able to turn them one moment from that on which they were fixed, even "the land which is very far off."

"Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land which is very far off."

Mrs. Forrester was not familiar with these sweet words; they awakened no echo of delight in her heart; but she knew that the child possessed a

source of happiness beside which all that she could offer lost its lustre ; and the knowledge irritated her. Meanwhile she wrote the letter ; to Rose herself. Thinking, and not without truth, that the little girl was somewhat wilful, and that to have her on the desired side was a great point gained, she held out all possible attractions ; the fresh, free country, the luxuriant garden, the long holidays, the drives to the town, and lastly, in a little note apart for Mr. King, commendation of his eldest daughter, with assurances that the greatest care should be taken of the younger, and a suggestion that Isabel's supervision would be sufficient guarantee for her well-being.

"Now," she said with some exultation, when she had folded and sealed her letter, "I hope we shall soon have Rose to make us merry ; but meanwhile we must not be dull. Ring. We will order a carriage to take us to Eastcliff directly after dinner."

Mrs. Forrester paid the very kindest attention to her little niece all through the drive, pointing out everything that was new or attractive, and encouraging questions by her very kind manner of answering and explaining. Isabel enjoyed it thoroughly. A drive was a rare treat to her.

"You ought to learn drawing," said Mrs. Forrester, presently. "You have such an eye for the beauti-

ful, I am sure you would make something of an artist. Should you like it?"

"Very much," said Isabel. "I have tried to draw sometimes, but I have never learned."

"You shall have some lessons," replied Mrs. Forrester, who had been something of an artist herself. "Stop!" she called to the driver. "We will walk; you can wait for us here. This is the High Street; look about and amuse yourself; I am going in here."

She entered a shop where prints and pictures of all descriptions were displayed, and Isabel found plenty of interest and amusement while her aunt made arrangements for the drawing lessons to begin without loss of time. "Two little girls," she said; she seemed to take Rose's coming for granted.

"Now," said Mrs. Forrester, when they were once more in the street, "you must not come to Eastcliff for nothing; look about, and see what you want."

"I do not want anything," said Isabel.

"But you must want something," said her aunt. "I am going to make you a present. What shall it be?"

Isabel felt shy of answering this question. "Whatever you like, aunt," she said, at last.

"Whatever *you* like," was the reply. "Look about and make your choice."

Isabel began obediently to look about her, but without the dimmest idea of what she should choose. Wants and longings were so foreign to her—her share of happiness so completely sufficed—that when told to wish, she found it hard to obey. Something for papa or for Rose would have delighted her indeed, but for herself, it gave her just now more perplexity than pleasure.

“You seem to find a difficulty,” said Mrs. Forrester; “I cannot think why, for you shall have whatever you ask for. I can trust you not to ruin me; you may ask for what you like, except a book. I will not give you books; you have enough of those already.”

Isabel had been on the point of ending her difficulties with a book, and this speech from her aunt renewed them; she walked on, attentively examining the shops, and puzzling herself extremely; but no happy suggestion was the result.

“Well,” said Mrs. Forrester, at last, after a period of, for her, unusual patience, “I seem to have given you a task beyond you. As you really cannot decide for yourself, I must help you.” She glanced at Isabel. “You do not wear jewellery, I think, and children are better without it. You have a watch, and, now I come to think of it, that is strange for such a little girl; how came you by it?”

"It was mamma's watch," said Isabel; "she gave it to me. I have worn it ever since."

"What should you say to something from here?" said Mrs. Forrester, presently, stopping before a draper's window. She entered without waiting for an answer, which was fortunate, as Isabel had none ready.

"Show me some bright silks, suitable for children."

The shopman produced his gayest, and, looking first at his customer's own handsome attire, his very costliest silks. Mrs. Forrester entered on a very careful examination, and at last, with assent, though not much assistance from Isabel, chose a shaded bright and pale pink check, on a white ground.

"There," she said, as, their carriage having been called, the shopman placed the parcel in Isabel's hands, "I hope my choice pleases you."

"Yes, thank you, aunt. It is very pretty," replied Isabel, demurely.

"I do not believe you," said Mrs. Forrester. "I cannot believe you this time; you do not look pleased at all."

"I am very much obliged," said Isabel, feeling much embarrassed between truth and politeness.

"I do not want you to be obliged; I want you to be pleased. Of course you are grateful, because

that is proper ; but my present does not make you happy."

Isabel could not say it did ; indeed, since the proposal of a gift, pleasure had been lost in perplexity. She was pleased by her aunt's kindness, but as to the expression of it, she could not feel any desire to wear the pink silk, and felt that she should hardly recognize herself in the bright, delicate attire, which would meet with, at least, Martha's disapproval.

"There ; do not let it make you unhappy," said Mrs. Forrester, taking pity on the child's blushing face of embarrassment. "If you really dislike the dress, we will say no more about it. I will give it to Rose."

"To Rose !" Isabel recollected the many speeches of desire and admiration which her sister had let fall concerning Violetta's pretty dress ; she had perceived, with observation worthy of her motherly office, that the child had some inclination to vanity, and she felt more unwilling to let her have the attractive dress than to wear it herself.

"Shall I keep it for Rose ?" asked Mrs. Forrester.

"No ; do not keep it for Rose."

"Do you wish for it yourself ?"

Isabel looked at her aunt's face—a blushing look of apology—while she answered: "It was very kind of you to give it to me, but I do not wish for it."

"Then Rose will—I am sure she will—I will keep it for her." Mrs. Forrester held out her hand for the parcel.

"I would rather wear it myself than give it to Rose, if you please," replied Isabel.

"And why, pray, are you determined that little Rose shall not have it? Are you afraid she should outshine you?"

"We do not generally have such pretty frocks," said Isabel, with fresh blushes. "Rose is very fond of pretty things, and often wishes for them; and I am afraid, if you gave that to her, it would make her vain."

"And are you not afraid for yourself, you little piece of wisdom?" said Mrs. Forrester, apparently much amused.

"No," replied Isabel, unheeding or not perceiving the raillery; "I think not."

"So you think that Rose is vain and you are not. I cannot say which is the vainest."

Mrs. Forrester laughed. No more was said just then on the subject, but the silk and Isabel were the next day delivered into Henderson's hands, to be fitted to each other; and ere this was accomplished, a fresh supply of what Mrs. Forrester called "the dangerous fabric" appeared.

Isabel felt half inclined to hope that Rose's invitation would be declined, but it was not. Carefully

though Mr. King sought to guide and guard his little daughter, he committed her not to himself but to the Lord.

“Not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” He felt the truth of these words, and with many earnest prayers that that “will of God” might be accomplished in Rose, he let her go.

Philip justified all Isabel’s fears. The very first thing she saw when taking her walk the next morning was his face in its usual position, just above the garden-wall; and very much surprised he looked when Isabel turned down another path, and seemed resolutely intent on avoiding him. He took care to watch for her next appearance from behind the trees, and then he called her; she took no notice for a time, but was at last obliged to pay some attention to his vehemently repeated questions as to the reason of her strange behaviour.

“I thought *you* would speak truth,” were his first reproachful words as she drew near. “You said yesterday you had forgiven me, and yet to-day you will not look at me.”

“I have, Philip,” said Isabel; “I have forgiven you, though indeed *I* had not much to forgive, but I cannot talk to you; I have promised Aunt Forrester I would not.”



"Promised you would not! How could you? It was unkind."

"I couldn't help it, really. I am very sorry—as sorry as you are, but Aunt Forrester made me promise."

"Didn't I say rightly she was a dragoness!" exclaimed Philip, with increased vehemence. "Isn't she cross and disagreeable? She can't bear to see people enjoy themselves. But she is not *my* aunt, thank goodness; and I shall talk to you as much as I have a mind. You needn't answer me unless you like."

"But I cannot listen. I may not stay here with you. Do get down from the wall."

"Get down from the wall! what should I do in that hole all by myself?"

"A hole! Oh, Philip, your beautiful garden, and the sky, and the sunshine! What did you do before I came?"

"I don't know; but whatever I did I don't mean to do now. I have a right to sit on the wall if I like. Half of it is mine; and when Mrs. Forrester wants to sit on her half, I'll make room for her."

Philip laughed, but not pleasantly; he began to pick little bits of moss and mortar from the top of the old wall, and throw them discontentedly about.

"I must go," said Isabel, and she walked slowly away.

She felt very sorry for her new friend, for she saw he was unhappy and ill at ease, and she longed to help him.

"I wish Aunt Forrester had not forbade my speaking to him," she thought. "Perhaps I might have persuaded him to read the Bible; that would make him happy. He said he thought he would read some, but now I cannot ask him anything about it. I wish I had before." She stopped. "It would not be any harm to go back just for that," she said to herself. A moment she stood pondering—a moment undecided, then she moved on. "To obey is better than sacrifice." These words made her continue her walk, and kept her in the shadow of the trees all the morning.

Thus, morning after morning the walks were taken; shorter and a little less pleasant than they had been, for Isabel seldom raised her eyes to the wall without seeing the watcher whom she might not address, and one look at his gloomy and sometimes angry face was enough to take the brightness from other sights for a long time.

Then Rose arrived. Mrs. Forrester went herself to Eastcliff to meet her. "You must not be jealous, my dear," she said to Isabel, as they drove off on

their pleasant errand, but it was a very unnecessary remark ; Isabel was more likely to be jealous for, than of, her little sister.

How much she loved and missed her, she hardly knew till she had her again—till that evening, in the quiet of their own room, she once more held Rose in her arms, once more looked into the bright, loving eyes, felt again the soft little hand laid confidently in hers, heard the childish voice repeat sweet words which herself had taught—and by the little one's side prayed a prayer tender with the love of father, mother, and sister, all in one.





## CHAPTER XVI.

### FAR AWAY FLOWERS.

**S**O days passed on : the glorious face of the August sun was seldom hidden ; larks, thrushes, blackbirds, and nightingales, divided the day and half the night musically among them ; Rose, with bright eyes, looked at the flowers, gathered from them what was sweeter than honey, and under every tree and in every field sang like a happy bird set free.

But pleasant though her life was at Little Cliff, I doubt whether her feeling towards her aunt was of such real tenderness as Isabel's. Perhaps they were too nearly alike, each too quick in temper to live peaceably together ; perhaps Mrs. Forrester's unceasing and marked efforts to win her niece's affection were more than the child could bear without being a little spoiled, for several times vehement words on either side were heard, and now and then Isabel had to be appealed to for the restoration of peace and order.

"I am going to send you a long walk this afternoon," said Mrs. Forrester one morning. "You have not seen the very loveliest part of Little Cliff, where the woods and rocks meet, and it seems as if those sharp precipices must end in the sea."

"And do they?" asked Rose.

"No; more woods and meadows are at their foot; but you must go and see for yourself. Anna shall take you there this afternoon, if I can trust you."

"You can trust me," said Rose, "and Isabel, of course; but I wish you could come."

"I wish I could, but it is too far for me, and Henderson does not like to walk out. I think you will do very well with Anna."

"Oh yes, aunt," said Isabel; "we generally walk out alone at home."

"Then do not tire yourselves this morning," said Mrs. Forrester, re-entering the house. This conversation had been held in the garden.

"I say," said a voice behind the children, "I shall go too."

A head was very cautiously made visible above the garden wall.

"You," said Isabel, turning towards Philip.

Mrs. Forrester's severity towards him had somewhat relaxed, or else her confidence in her niece had increased; the children were no longer absolutely

forbidden to speak to one another, though any intimacy between them was discouraged.

"Yes, me," replied Philip; "who else did you think was here?"

"No one; but do not think of going with us."

"Why not? She's not going, so I can."

"Anna is going," said Rose.

Philip snapped his fingers.

"That will settle Anna; she'll take me, and keep it snug. She's a sensible girl, and worth more than Mrs. Forrester and Henderson put together."

"Hush," said Isabel. "Philip, you must not teach Rose to be naughty."

"What! doesn't she know how without being taught?"

"Yes, she does know how," said Isabel, as Philip thought, more gravely than the occasion required, "but do not help her."

"Well, I won't," said Philip, "only have me with you this afternoon."

"Do not think of it," said Isabel; "I am sure Aunt Forrester would not like it."

"Like it!" re-echoed Philip; "I should just think she wouldn't."

"Then we cannot do it. We must do as she wishes; she is our aunt remember, and we have to obey her."

"So you can. I have not asked you to do anything. I can walk when I like and where I like; and I choose to go to the Cliff this afternoon. Come, don't be so obstinate; I'll take care of you over the steep places, and show you the prettiest way; and I'll pick lots of flowers for Rose, where she could not reach them herself."

"Oh, do!" exclaimed Rose. "Let him come, Isabel."

"I should like him to come," replied Isabel, "very much. Perhaps aunt will let us if we ask."

"No, no!" exclaimed Philip; "I won't have you ask. Directly she sees any one wants a thing, she says, No."

"Oh, Philip!"

"Well, she does," was the reply, somewhat moodily given. "Whatever you do, don't ask her. Let me alone; I'll manage it."

"I would rather not go than that you should do so," said Isabel. "If you meet us, we will go home."

"I believe you would," said Philip, with a half smile. "You are very tiresome; there's no more doing anything with you than with your aunt; only somehow you don't make me feel so angry."

"I wish you wouldn't feel so, Philip. I wish you would not want things you cannot have, when there are so many pleasant things you can have."

"Are there? what things? I wish I were you."

"That is not one of the things you can have," said Isabel, laughing.

"Well, what are they? I don't see what I can have that's worth wishing for."

Isabel did not answer immediately. "There are things," she said, "which are worth wishing and wishing for till you get them, and those are things you can have."

"What things?"

"The best things; the things which will last for ever; the things which God has prepared for them that love him."

"I don't know how it is," said Philip, "but whatever you begin to talk about you always end with preaching. Now, I won't tease any more about going out with you to-day, if you'll promise me one thing."

"What?" asked Isabel.

"You said perhaps your papa would come to fetch you and stay a few days; promise me that then you will get him to let us all go out together for a good scramble."

"If I can."

"But you must promise."

"I cannot promise for certain; we cannot tell



what may happen ; but I think, if he comes, he will let us go."

Philip was obliged to be satisfied with this, and he kept his share of the bargain faithfully, though when presently, from his watch-tower, he saw the two little girls start on their expedition, escorted only by Anna, he felt sorely tempted to join the party.

It was tempting indeed. The lane where they walked was so shady, and the whole landscape beyond so sunny ; every little flower lifted such a bright face and spoke in language of such sweet perfume ; all the balmy air was so full of music—the warbling of birds, the hum of insects, the ripple of clear little brooks ; and then their own cheery voices, and the simple childlike hearts, yet fresh and untouched by care, which could take all this beauty and gladness and give thanks for it as their own.

Mrs. Forrester had rightly called the Cliff the loveliest walk in the neighbourhood ; that little lane grew narrower and wilder, till at last it was only a rough path winding to the foot of the steep, high rocks. Here a green slope led them to the top, high above the meadows and roads they had lately trod, and even above the tall trees, whose topmost branches had just now seemed to Rose almost to touch the sky.

It was a moment to make any heart glad ; to stand thus on the high cliff and gaze on the fair expanse of country for miles around ; to see the rich carpeting of long grass close at their feet, and the soft summer sky far above their heads ; to draw long breaths of the pure country air that blew so freely on the heights.

"Anna, it is beautiful," said Isabel at last, while Rose danced singing round them, and, for very ecstasy, picked handfuls of the grass at her feet, and then threw it away for new treasures.

"Looking and looking, Isabel," she said at last. "You stand as if you could look for ever."

"I feel as if I could," was the reply.

"Draw it," said Rose. "Have you brought your sketch-book and pencil?"

"I have, but I never could draw anything like this."

"Do try. I should like to see a picture of this always at home."

"You must keep it in your mind, then, for I never could put it on paper. But I will draw something—just a little bit of a house, if I can see one, for a remembrance."

"There's a cottage away there in the hollow," said Anna. "Do you see it, miss ; just the chimneys and one window above the cliff."

"Oh, that is pretty!" said Isabel. "I will draw that; and Rose, what will you do?"

"Run over the grass and look for flowers. I wish Philip was here, we should have had such fun."

"Do not think of Philip; gather a pretty nosegay for aunt."

"Very well," said Rose, "quite a wild one—berries, and grasses, and all sorts. But it shall be quite my own nosegay; Anna can stay by you."

Anna, Henderson's little factotum, was pleased by this arrangement. She had a great regard for Miss King, and was especially anxious to watch the process of transferring the cottage chimney and window, with its back-ground of wild foliage and fore-ground of smooth turf, to Isabel's drawing-book. The little book had taken two or three rambles with its owner. Mrs. Forrester had been right in surmising that her niece had a taste for drawing—the few lessons had developed it; she was a bold draughtsman, too, and any little bit of cottage roof or rustic stile she met with in her walks was sure to find its way, though of course with many imperfections, to her book.

The subject now in hand was beyond what she had hitherto attempted; all her energies had to be given, and a good deal of patience too. Many a time the chimney slanted and had to be rubbed out,

or the graceful foliage would appear upon the paper like stiff fagots, or the smooth grass like hard boards. Long ago Rose would have thrown aside the sketch-book in despair, but Isabel brought the patience she had learned to her assistance even in this, and with quiet perseverance continued her efforts. They were rewarded at last; the chimney stood erect, and the little window beneath took its proper form and place; the touch of the foliage was softer, and the grass beneath going to receive her attention, when a cluster of bright lilac flowers at the edge of the cliff reminded her of Rose's pursuits.

"Rose would like these," she said; "where is she?"

"Shall I get them for her, miss?" inquired Anna.

"No; she wishes the nosegay to be quite her own. But where is she?—Rose!"

"Here I am," said a little voice in the distance, "down here."

"Down where," said Isabel, looking round; "I do not see her."

"Nor me neither," said Anna.

"Where, Rose?—where?" called Isabel.

"Down here," repeated the child's voice. "Such beautiful flowers! Come and look!"

Isabel ran to that side of the cliff whence the sound proceeded. Anna followed. The descent here

was easier, with bright patches of green. A few yards down the precipice stood Rose, surrounded by the wild rock blossoms.

"Oh, miss," said Anna, in a voice of extreme terror, and laying her hand on Isabel's arm, "she's down the shaking side!"

"Is it dangerous?" asked Isabel, alarmed more by the manner than the words.

"Dreadful!" was the reply. "Them bits of turf rolls right down to the bottom almost as soon as you set foot on them."

"Oh, Anna!" exclaimed Isabel, still thinking only that Rose had had a wonderful escape, and that by the way she had gone down she could return.

"Rose, come back!" she called; but Anna's hand was laid upon her lips, and the sound hardly escaped.

"Don't, miss—don't!" she said. "You must not call to her; she could never get back; she must stop there till I get some one; she mustn't move a foot! Oh my! oh my! to think I never thought to warn her of it. Pretty dear! and now she's all away down there!"

Anna hid her face in her shawl. For an instant Isabel stood speechless, almost transfixed with amazement and terror. It had come upon her so suddenly; but a moment before all had been bright-

ness and peace. Now—but there was no time for thinking then. She drew Anna's hands from her face.

"Quick, Anna—quick," she said. "What must we do? She will move to pick the flowers."

"She mustn't! Oh, don't let her, miss!" exclaimed Anna.

"Couldn't she come up again, are you sure? Not if I went to help her."

"No, miss; no," replied Anna, seizing the little girl's arm, "you can't get down; you'll be killed if you try! I'll call some one, if you can get her to stand still just where she is; she mustn't move! We don't know what parts is dangerous and what isn't."

There was no more time for disputing the point. Isabel turned towards her sister.

"Rose!" she called—not in a very loud, but a clear voice, whose calmness astonished even herself, as she felt the quick beating of her heart and the tremor of every limb—"Rose!"

The little girl looked up—such a happy face, so unconscious of the danger near her! That innocent look of inquiry and attention made Isabel's task harder; her voice was scarcely as clear next time.

"You must stay where you are, Rose; you must not move or try to come back to us; the cliff is

dangerous. Anna will fetch some one to help you up."

It was difficult so to speak as to impress Rose with the necessity of obeying, and yet not to excite or alarm her. Fortunately Isabel's unvarying patience and gentle firmness in past times had done their work; one look from her had more effect than a multitude of words from others.

"Stand just where you are, dear," said Isabel; "try not to move at all."

"But what is the matter?" asked Rose; "why mayn't I come up?"

"You shall very soon," replied Isabel—"very soon, I hope; only try to do just as I tell you."

"Come down to me, then; do!"

"I cannot come to you, dear, but somebody will very soon. Do not be afraid, but stand just there. Anna will fetch some one to help us. Anna, run!"

"I will, dear, that I will," said Anna, showing a tear-stained face over Isabel's shoulder, "only you stand quiet; there'll be some one in that house close by."

"Don't you leave me," called Rose, as Isabel turned to give parting injunctions to Anna.

"No, I shall not move," said Isabel, drawing nearer the edge of the cliff that the child might see her plainly; "we will both stand here, quite still."

After Anna's words, Isabel could hardly bear to look at the little figure below her, the brightest and most precious among all the blossoms on that bit of insecure ground. There was a moment of deep silence, broken at last by a very trembling little voice, "Speak to me, Isabel, I am so frightened down here alone."

"Alone! Don't you see me, Rose?" replied her sister, in as cheerful a voice as she could command; "I am close to you, and you know who else is with us, here as elsewhere."

"Yes, I know, but I want you nearer." Rose broke out into tears. "I don't like to see you up there; I want to feel your hand."

"Very soon, dearest; very soon I hope you will. Shall we pray God to take care of you? Don't you want to be gathered like a little lamb in the arms of Jesus just now, and carried in his bosom?"

Isabel knelt down on the grass, close on the edge of the cliff, with the long dark valley and the rough hill-side before her; before her, too, the little helpless sister towards whom she yearned; and before her, clearer yet to the child's bright faith, Him who has said, "Lo, I am with you alway."—"I will never leave you nor forsake you." The words of prayer were few, slowly and distinctly spoken, that each



might fall on the little one's ear ; very simple, that every one might enter her heart.

"Isabel," she said presently, "I am so tired of standing here."

"I know it, dear," said Isabel ; "I daresay you are, but I think Anna will soon come."

"Can you see her?"

No ; Isabel could not. The moments seemed very long while she waited, with no help in sight. She thought of her father, and how little he knew of the trouble his children were in ; then came the thought of a Father who did know all, and she turned a bright face again to Rose. Poor Rose's was not bright at all. To see Isabel and yet not be able to reach her, was in itself a grief ; nothing but her strong habit of obedience to, and confidence in, her sister's word, kept her now from making the attempt.

"Isabel ! Isabel !" she cried, in tones that went to her sister's heart, "I cannot stay. I am tired of standing down here, and it makes me giddy. I shall fall, oh ! down the hill !" and for the first time she seemed to realize the depth behind her. "Come, do come to me, Isabel," she entreated ; "I will stand still if you come. Just hold my hand, and I won't mind waiting."

Isabel could have borne much for herself ; it was

harder to bear for her sister ; she could not refuse her now. " If I let her fall "—the thought was not to be endured. She looked again for Anna a glance of ardent longing, but which met nothing.

" Come, come," called Rose, forgetting everything in the fear which was growing upon her ; " I shall fall, I know I shall ! "

Isabel was afraid that, in her excitement, she would forget to keep her footing.

" Hush, Rose," she said ; " keep quiet ; I will come."

Anna's words, " You'll be killed if you try," recurred to her mind as she put the first foot over the edge of the cliff ; " but Rose will be if she falls," her thoughts replied, " and perhaps she is not ready."

There was no hesitation after that, though every step was slow and painful. Knowing the danger made the descent far more difficult than Rose's, in the happy search for flowers, had been ; those few dozen steps seemed thousands, but the little patch of green was reached at last.

" Quiet, Rose, keep quiet," she said, as she took her hand, for the child, in her ecstasy of her relief, had been ready to spring into her sister's arms. Very still and silent they stood now. Isabel dared not look behind her, hardly dared look at Rose, and, from the overhanging of the cliff, Anna would

not be visible until she came close to its edge. She was seen at last, with a man. "Two," he said, as he looked at the little figures side by side.

"Two," repeated Anna. "Oh, Miss Isabel!"

Isabel made no answer. The edge of turf on which she stood felt very insecure; Rose's little feet stood firmly on the grass, but for two, on the side where Isabel had descended, there was hardly room.

But now their time of trial was nearly over; the man was approaching them with great caution, and by what seemed to the two anxious watchers a very indirect path; he drew nearer and nearer; "Rose first," said Isabel, stretching out the little one's hand towards him, for he was nearer her own side.

"Better take the one comes first," he said. "It's safer."

"No; you cannot take me and leave her," said Isabel, firmly.

That was no time for discussion, and he obeyed. Perhaps his weight bore a little on the ledge of grass; perhaps Rose, in moving, shook her sister; for a moment, the strip of ground quivered; Isabel stretched out her hands, but they could lay hold on nothing; another moment, and but one little figure was seen! One little figure in the man's arms! Where was the other?

Anna, blinded by terror, could not see. Rose's

face was, fortunately, turned the other way. The man almost dropped his precious burden, for he knew what had happened, though he could not follow the movements of the falling figure. It was seen, at last, lying quite still on another strip of grass, far beneath them.

"Isabel! Isabel!" shrieked Rose. She would have leaped from the man's arms, but he held her tight.

"Take her home," he said; "right home."

"Is she dead?" whispered Anna, looking at the other child as, with Rose in her arms, she moved from him in mechanical and stupified obedience.

"Hush," replied the man, quickly. "How can I tell? She ain't gone very far; she ain't reached the rough part. I'll fetch my wife. Take this one away. Mrs. Forrester's, ain't it? We'll come after you."

Rose was quite quiet now; awe-struck and exhausted by all she had gone through, she lay, a heavy weight, in Anna's arms. How they reached home; how they told their terrible tale; how they endured the dreadful hour of suspense which followed, they never knew.

Then the other child was brought. Very white, very still, but alive.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### ROSE'S FIRST LETTER.

**A** LONG half hour Rose sat at the head of the stairs, while the doctor was in Isabel's room ; a long half hour, while footsteps hurried past her, and low whispers went on beside her, and dreadful memories made her hide her face and try to shut them out, in darkness which seemed only to reveal them more clearly.

Mrs. Forrester came to her at last.

"Rose," she said, almost too terror-stricken and broken-hearted herself to enter into the child's feelings or remember her tender years, "you must write to your father. Dr. Gibson says there is no necessity for alarming him by a telegram ; there is not immediate danger. Tell your father what has happened, and that he is to come at once."

The only meaning Rose gathered from this speech was, that she was to write and tell all to her father. It was a difficult task in her bewildered state, indeed, under any circumstances it would have

been difficult, for she had never written a letter in her life. She went slowly down-stairs into the drawing-room; there all looked so sunny, so calm, so much as usual, that she could hardly realize what a change that painful afternoon had brought to them; it was well for her that she had an occupation which, sad though it was, served to pass some of the slow minutes away. She found paper, pen, and ink, and sitting down, betook herself to her task; the interest and occupation of it served to comfort her a little; the actual writing of each word required some pains, and it even seemed a pleasant approach to her father when she saw the words, "My dear papa," very fairly traced on the sheet before her.

Mrs. Forrester had forgotten, when she deputed the writing of the letter to Rose, that the child would not think of breaking the news gently; the dreadful facts were told plainly, abruptly, and without any explanation:—

"MY DEAR PAPA,—Isabel has fallen all down the cliff; her bones are not broken, the doctor says; but I think she must be nearly dead; she is quite still, and her eyes are shut, and she doesn't speak at all; her face is quite white. Do come quickly to us, dear papa; Aunt Forrester wants you, and I want you so much, and I am sure Isabel must want you worse than all, only she does not say so. It is very dreadful here. Do come.—I am,  
your dear child,

ROSE."

This took her a long time to write; when it was

accomplished, she read it over with some satisfaction, almost, in the interest of producing it, forgetting its purport.

"I hope he will come quickly," she said to herself. Then she added a little bit: "Try and come this evening; it will be so dreadful all night without you."

She found an envelope and wrote the address, but this did not please her; it was difficult to keep straight without lines, and she wrote "Mr. King" so very large, that the rest of the direction had to be compressed into a very small space indeed.

"Oh, dear, this won't do," she said. She looked at it a moment: there was no Isabel now at hand to whom she could apply. Poor Rose was fast growing old and self-reliant that afternoon; she took another envelope and tried again, with more care and better success; but even then she did not find her task complete. "Oh, dear! the letter has no ending yet," she said, looking at it again with some dismay; "they always make an ending to their letters at Miss Elliot's, but I don't know how to make the finishing to mine, and then it can't go, and papa will not come!"

This brought a shower of tears. If papa but came, Rose almost felt as if all must be well again; at any rate, she could not then be alone, forgotten

in perplexity and sorrow, as now. But she remembered that it was near post time, so, brushing away her tears, with dim eyes and trembling hands she began to examine a few letters which lay on the table, if among them she might find what would assist her. In most of them she could not decipher a word, but at last one appeared, written in a large clear hand; Rose glanced at the ending, and, with great relief, succeeded in reading, "Believe me, dear madam, yours faithfully," &c.

It seemed a strange ending, but as it was in this letter she supposed it would be the correct formula to add to her own, and therefore copied it with great care and exactitude; then she added the date, and once more read the whole over. It was not perfect yet. "Dear madam," she said, "that means a lady; I cannot put that for papa."

Again the sense of forlornness came strongly upon her, but a bright idea visited her at last. She erased "madam" and substituted "sir;" hardly nearer what should have been, you will think, but Rose was satisfied, and folding her letter put it into an envelope, and then went in search of some one who would take it to the post.

No one was to be seen; the house was very still; she found her way through the kitchens into a back yard. Here even was no sign of life; Rose thought



the yard was empty, till a gentle whisper of her name made her look round.

There, seated on a heap of fagots in a far away corner, hatless, motionless, spiritless, was Philip Knight.

"How is she?" he said, as the little girl came towards him.

"She's up-stairs. They haven't let me see her since. Oh, Philip!" and Rose crept close beside him, among the fagots.

"She is alive," said Philip, presently.

"Do you think she will die?" whispered Rose, half frightened at her own question. "Oh, she mustn't, she must not! I could never do without!"

"No, no; I don't think *that*," said Philip, putting his arm round his trembling little companion. "That *couldn't* be. But oh, if she had let me go!" and for a moment he let his head sink on his knees, and tried to fight away tears which he thought unmanly—"this would never have happened!"

"Wouldn't it?" said Rose, with a great longing that they could have that afternoon over again and live through it differently.

"No," said Philip, with some bitterness, not against Isabel, but against fate, to which he ascribed this and all other events. He had no comforting thoughts of all being from the hand of God, no

knowledge of the all things which work together for good, he sorrowed as those without hope. "It wouldn't have happened," he continued. "It shouldn't! Do you think *I* would have let her go down after you? I'd sooner have pitched myself from the top to the bottom than have let either of you be there."

This thought of what might have been, of how all this might have been avoided, added new poignancy to Rose's grief; she wept a few moments, with her head leaning against Philip's shoulder; wept without control; wept as she had never thought to weep, with no hope of help or comfort from her father and sister.

Was it the memory of what they had so long sought to teach her, that at last checked her sobs? Did any sweet word of comfort find its way to her heart and heal its wound? Yes. The training of the child in the way she should go began, even now, to bear fruit; she could not feel, as Philip did, that all this might have been prevented by his presence; she could not, as he did, blame Mrs. Forrester as the original cause of their insufficient protection. "It is the Lord." These words were in her heart, and though she could not yet say, "Let him do what seemeth him good," she no longer felt so lost and forgotten; before the sense

of that presence, noisy grief and repining were hushed ; a favourite hymn of her father's floated dimly in her mind,—

“ Clouds and darkness oft distress me,  
Great and many are my foes ;  
Anxious griefs and thoughts perplex me,  
But my Father knows.”

My Father ! Could Rose say this ? Had the rending of other ties, the sudden withdrawing of other props, cast her on Him who is “ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ? ” Was sorrow opening a way into the child's heart for the sweet spirit of adoption ? Who shall say ?

“ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

But seconds and minutes fly swiftly by, whether laden with grief or on wings of joy. The moments were passing away now, and suddenly Rose, remembering this fact, bethought herself of her letter, and of the errand which had taken her to the yard.

“ I wish I could find somebody to carry my letter,” she said, looking round her.

“ A letter,” said Philip. “ Have you written it ? To your father ? ”

"Yes," said Rose, holding it out to him, with a strange mixture of sorrow and pride.

He examined the specimen with some curiosity.

"It isn't fastened," he said.

"No; I couldn't find anything to fasten it with."

"It cannot go so," said Philip; "but it fastens itself. See, this gum on the edge of the envelope will shut it up tight."

"Read it," said Rose. "I never wrote a letter before in my life. I don't know if this one is right."

Philip read. He had long fought against tears, and now this grotesque epistle moved him strangely; there was a struggle between tears and laughter; he would not give way to the former, and so, at last, vented his excitement in a long, though not by any means a heartfelt peal of the latter.

It shocked Rose, though hardly less than it shocked himself.

"Laughing, Philip!" she said, in a tone that went to his heart; "I am sure I shall never want to laugh again, at least not till Isabel gets well."

"I am sure I don't feel like laughing," replied Philip. "But your letter cannot go so."

"Why not?"

"Whatever made you put this?" He pointed to the last words.

"I didn't know how to finish, and I copied this from a letter of aunt's, a real letter, come from the post, so it must be right."

"It is not," said Philip.

"What can I do then? I thought it must be right if I copied it. They learn to write letters at Miss Elliot's, where we go to school, but I am not in the first class, so I haven't begun."

"I will help you to write another," said Philip, glad to make amends for his apparent want of feeling. "But we must be quick, it is nearly post time. Get another sheet of paper; or, stop, you can't bring ink and all the rest of it out here. Supposing I write on the back of the letter what you ought to say, then you can go in and copy it. I know a short cut across the fields to a corner of the road where I can meet the postman as he comes out of the village, and I'll carry your letter there to him."

"Thank you," said Rose. "But is this all wrong? Aunt Forrester said I must tell papa what has happened, and ask him to come quickly."

"Yes, but I am afraid your way of telling will frighten your father a great deal," said Philip, again examining the letter, and this time very gravely. "It is hard though to say what has happened, without frightening him. It's frightful enough!"

He began to write.

"My dear papa." That was the only easy part; then came a long pause of consideration. "Aunt Forrester wishes me to write and ask you to come here, if possible. Isabel has met with an accident; she has had a fall down a hill. The doctor says none of her bones are broken, but she seems to be hurt, and is confined to her bed."

Philip read this aloud.

"You haven't said that I want him," objected Rose, "and you have just 'come if possible.' He *must* come! I know he must!" she was ready to cry again. "Oh, I want him *so* much!"

"He will come," said Philip. "This letter is sure to bring him."

"Then put that I want him," said Rose, but half consoled.

Philip made the addition.

"And I want him quickly," said Rose. "Put, 'try and come this evening,' but, oh dear! it's getting so late; I wish the postman would come."

"Not till your letter is ready," said Philip; "but it is of no use to put 'try and come this evening.' Your father will not have the letter until to-morrow morning, and then it will take him a little time to get here."

"To-morrow," said Rose. "Not until to-morrow! and at what time will he get here?"

"In the afternoon, I daresay."

"To-morrow afternoon," repeated Rose, trying to reconcile herself to the necessity of waiting. "Then it is of no use to put that last piece. Now make an ending."

"There is no need to make an ending; what you wrote first was very well, 'I am, your dear child, Rose.' Now go in and copy it."

Rose was not long in returning; Philip took the letter and started with it across the fields, Rose stood alone at the gate waiting for him.

"Still here," he said when he returned; "it is getting dark and chilly, ought you not to go in?"

Go in, to what? The question rose dark before her. How pleasant going home had hitherto been, what bright smiles, what a warm welcome had always until to-day awaited her! Now, she went up-stairs without meeting anyone; the door of her sister's room was half open; she entered softly; Isabel still lay quiet, with closed eyes, her face looked white in the surrounding dimness. Rose could not bear the stillness and the darkness; she crept up to her aunt who sat watching, and took her hand. "Is she better?" was her anxious whisper.

"A little, we hope," was the reply, tardily given, almost without a look at the little questioner.

"Does she lie so all the time?"

"She has opened her eyes once."

"Will she *never* speak?"

Mrs. Forrester could not answer that question; it was too anxiously repeated in her own heart. She pressed Rose's hand, and the child stood looking at the still figure on the bed—a long, earnest look, not anxious or fearful, only very very grave. No tears dimmed her eyes now; no questions disturbed her thoughts; her whole self was intent on watching her sister.

It was hard to say whether Isabel was sensible; the expression of the face was rather of repose than of unconsciousness. She seemed, even now, to feel the presence of the quiet little watcher by her side, for after a while she opened her eyes and fixed them on the child's face, at first wonderingly, but then with a faint little smile, rather in her eyes than on her lips.

Only repeated signs from Henderson kept Rose from testifying her joy at this token of recognition; the four were again very still for some time, then Isabel's hand was feebly laid on the little one that had so long rested patiently on the bed. "Rose," said a low clear voice.



'Yes, Isabel, I'm here,' was the reply, more eager than Henderson approved.

Mrs. Forrester seemed so wrapped up in silent dismay, as hardly to notice what passed. Isabel closed her eyes once more, but now and then, opening them again, fixed them lovingly on the child's face, as if to keep the image of it fresh in her mind. It was a pleasant image now; a little pale perhaps, but with tear-stains hidden by returning smiles. Isabel had spoken to her, she had again seen the earnest look of those soft eyes, and Rose felt as if she could patiently await all that might come.

The silence was broken presently by a noise of sobbing that came plainly through the half open door, and whispered remonstrances were heard, answered only by renewed sobs and moans. Henderson, who was an experienced nurse, and who, in her mistress's present state, felt the charge of the child laid entirely upon herself, moved from her post at the bedside to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. Isabel's eyes followed her inquiringly. "What?" she said.

"Some one crying," said Rose, before Henderson could stop her.

"Who?" said Isabel again. She looked distressed. The first time a shadow had crossed her face, in all that painful evening.

"Who?" she repeated, as Henderson did not answer.

"Only Anna," was the reply, given with studied carelessness.

But the name recalled all the events of the day, at first dimly and confusedly, afterwards more clearly; she began to see a reason why Anna stood in need of particular sympathy.

"Anna," she said, with a look towards the door.

"Go away, will you," whispered Henderson and her abettor outside. "Go away, I say, and keep quiet, can't you?"

Isabel made a great effort. "No," she said, raising her voice, "Anna!" and Henderson was too good a nurse to dispute with her patient; so, after some whispered exhortation, and a great effort at composure from Anna herself, she allowed her to appear just inside the door.

"Come," said Isabel, pointing to a place beside Rose.

Henderson saw that any further attempts to prevent an interview would be both useless and hurtful; so, after a meaning look of warning and reproach she pushed Anna, frightened and bewildered, to the place pointed out.

"Why did you cry?" asked Isabel, after awhile.

Sobs were the only answer; Anna's composure was fast disappearing.

"What is it?"

"I can't bear to see you so," sobbed Anna. "Oh my, oh my; if I'd only thought to warn you!"

Isabel's voice was quiet and stronger. "Hush," she said, "you mustn't. It was not you."

"It was, oh it was," said Anna, quite giving way to excitement, and regardless of Henderson's gestures and efforts to draw her away. "It is me!"

"It is the Lord," said Isabel, repeating the words which had comforted Rose, more to herself than to the girl. But she added the second part, "let him do what seemeth him good."

"It's me! it's me has killed you," still moaned Anna.

There was a long stillness. "If I do die," said Isabel at last, "you must remember it is not you, it is the Lord."

Again she closed her eyes and seemed to stay herself on this. Only Anna's sobs broke the silence; Rose still kept her place and her quiet watch; Henderson was too angry, and Mrs. Forrester still too anxious and distressed to speak.

"Do not cry," said the quiet little voice again, presently. "I am not afraid. Are you? Should you be afraid?"

Anna could make no answer. Isabel spoke again presently, slowly but distinctly. "'Though I walk

through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.' Who, Anna?"

Anna was familiar with this verse and the psalm from which it was taken; she quieted her sobs to answer, "The Lord."

"Our Lord Jesus Christ," rejoined Isabel, "who died for us that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

"Together with him!" The child seemed to rest herself on these words. Her eyes closed again; Anna was quieted in the presence of that peace of God which ruled in this little one's heart; she suffered herself to be led from the room, and a long silence came once more upon the four that were left.

What thoughts filled Mrs. Forrester's mind? what kept her so still and silent? what made her wear such a troubled face? Was it a doubt as to the child's well-being and safety, or did the question arise in her heart, "How would it be with you in such a day?"

"How would it be with you in such a day?" The "strong man armed" was fast giving way to the "stronger than he." "All her armour wherein she trusted," was dropping from her at the sight of a weak little child, unlearned, outwardly unprotected, but strong in "the whole armour of God." So the evening passed away. Henderson recommended

Rose to go to bed, a suggestion which was very distasteful to the little girl, but which, recollecting that resistance might disturb her sister, she at last moved to obey.

It was a hard moment. Her aunt scarcely roused to wish her good night, and to leave without any word of farewell from Isabel, was almost more than she, strong though she had become in an unwonted self-control, could bear. But it was spared her; as she reached the door, the movement aroused Isabel. "Rose," she said, and Rose, gladly obeying the summons, returned to her place at the bedside.

"Going away?" said Isabel.

"I am going to bed."

"Good night. Kiss me;" and Rose imprinted a kiss on the untroubled brow.

"Say a verse for me, dear," said Isabel again.

Very naturally, the words which always met Rose's eyes on her first awaking, the words which mingled with her last thoughts at night, occurred now to her mind.

"He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." She hardly knew how apt it was, nor how fully the truth of the promise would be proved. Surely, through all that long night, Isabel was carried in the bosom of the Good Shepherd, surely she was gathered in his arms,

surely this little lamb of the flock was gently led beside still waters and made to lie down in green pastures; "for so he giveth his beloved sleep."

The morning rose calm and beautiful, bright and fair, even in Spring Row, where Mr. King sat at his solitary breakfast-table. How much at these seasons he missed his little girls, it would be hard to say; he was now anxiously counting the days and looking forward to the one, not far distant, when he might hope to have them with him again.

Martha's feelings on the subject were not stronger, but more unrelenting, with less of hope and desire, and more of anger and remorse. Isabel's departure had been hard to bear, and she had only consoled herself by lavishing double attention upon the little one left; but when Rose, too, had been taken from her, she had not spared Mr. King the expression of her feelings, and, bitterly resenting the thought that any one should take part in the care and management of her children, went about her daily duties, and waited on her master with a stern and silent, yet very apparent and unceasing protest against the arrangement.

Now, as she entered the room, her countenance looked more defiant, and the lines about it harder than even hers was wont to be; and though she really longed to hear of the welfare of the children,

she would not wait or manifest any desire to know if all was well, but retired immediately, triumphant in the reflection that no letter could console *her* for the absence of the little writer.

Mr. King, though he had been much grieved by Martha's rebellion against this temporary trial, hardly noticed her behaviour just now, so anxious was he to open and read the precious little document: "Rose's letter, written all by herself for her papa. Dear little girl!" he said, looking a moment at the direction, whose very imperfections were pleasantly familiar to his eyes; then he opened the envelope; very soon the few short facts were engraven on his mind, had entered his very heart. For a moment he felt almost like Martha, inclined to regret that he had allowed his children to go from him, and to refuse to be comforted. But soon the remembrance of his little girl's simple and unfeigned faith, and of its expression given in her last words, came to him, full of comfort: "This God is our God, for ever and ever; he will be our guide, even unto death." He could not doubt but that the guiding would be gentle, or that as her days, so her strength would be; and, to the question so often and so anxiously raised in his heart, "Is it well with the child?" faith could answer, "It is well."

To summon Martha was a painful task, but it

must be gone through ; he rang the bell and she came, still strong in her pride and self-will, little knowing how soon she would be brought to long for that state of things which she now refused to accept.

"Sit down, Martha," he said, and the grave voice and earnest look were not to be disobeyed. She took the seat pointed out to her.

Fortunately she could read, as her master had done ; there was no occasion to repeat the news, and indeed at that moment, Mr. King could hardly have found words to do so. He laid the letter before her.

"There is news, Martha—heavy to bear. We can only bear it in the strength of the Lord."

This prepared her, but she took the letter, still unsoftened and rebellious.

"I knew it," she said, hardly giving herself time to understand its contents, and flinging it from her, as if with it she could have flung away the cup which, unsweetened by faith in unchanging love, was bitter indeed to drink. "I knew it, when you sent them away, you would never have them again ! Never, never !" she repeated, in a voice low with suppressed anguish, rising from her chair and walking with hasty steps towards the door, as if she would have run away from the trial she would not



bear. "Never, poor dear ; and I'd loved her so long ! I wouldn't have let harm come near her ; I'd have kept her safe, if I'd died for it, if only you would have left her to me—but you wouldn't, though I told you all along how it would be, you wouldn't ! You sent them away !"

"Martha," said Mr. King, in a calm quiet voice, but one which arrested her attention and stayed the current of her words : "Martha, did you never read of Jonah, who tried to flee from the presence of the Lord, and how, not till he had been cast into the deep, in the midst of the seas, not till the floods compassed him about and all the billows and the waves of the Lord passed over him, did he desire to look again towards God's holy temple ? 'When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord.' But at last Jonah could say, 'Salvation is of the Lord.' Salvation is of the Lord, Martha—salvation, support, strength, in this time of heavy grief. Let us seek these from him ; let us pray." Mr. King knelt, as Hezekiah had done of old, spreading the letter before the Lord. Martha followed his example. She rose, quieter in manner and heart. Her strong will was being broken down ; sorrow was giving place to submission ; evil was being overcome of good.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### GREATER LOVE.

**H**ENDERSON spent that first night with Isabel. Mrs. Forrester had, with some difficulty, been prevailed upon to retire to rest at a late hour, but she returned to the child's side the next morning, almost before any one else in the house was astir. Isabel still slept, and her aunt was glad that she had come in time to see her first awakening.

"That whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."

These words, heard last night in the quiet little voice, had sounded again and again in Mrs. Forrester's ears. For the child's sake they were precious; she could not look either at the calm, slumbering face, and doubt their truth, and when at last, with a little sigh, sleep fled away and the eyes gently opened, their look of happy repose, and the habitual soft smile on the lips said again, though without voice, "Together with Him."

After the first recognition of her aunt, there was a look of inquiry round the room.

"What is it, my darling?" asked Mrs. Forrester, eagerly.

"Papa," said Isabel.

"We have sent for him. He will soon be here. Can you do with me, for a little while?"

Isabel's "Dear aunt," and her soft fondling of the hand beside her, was better to Mrs. Forrester than any more decided form of assent. It kept her happy all the morning, and early in the afternoon Mr. King and Martha arrived. It was a great relief to everybody. Mrs. Forrester had never thought to welcome him so gladly to her house. Henderson, though willing to lay herself out to the utmost for her little charge to whom she had become much attached, was, nevertheless, glad to resign the chief nursing and responsibility to Martha, who was very unwilling to allow any one to share it with her. Poor little Rose! who shall say how glad she felt when she laid her head on her father's shoulder, and there wept out the long pent-up tears, when she felt the strong arms round her, and herself carried, as in the old days at home, from the gate where she had met him into the house. And Isabel! Her state of feeling could always be described as "happy," but now it might be said to reach

"happiest." Her father himself watched beside her that first night; the very knowledge of his presence seemed to do her good; she slept calmly for several hours; he came to her side at her first awakening.

"How are you, dear child?" he said, bending over her.

"Much better, dear papa," was her reply "I have had such a sweet sleep."

"That you are sorry to awake?"

"No; that is pleasant too; pleasanter to awake and find you by me."

"And when I was not here, did my little girl sometimes awake and find herself alone?"

"No, papa; I think not."

"'When I awake, I am still with Thee,'" said her father, interpreting the child's look.

"Yes," said Isabel, with evident pleasure. "Say it again."

Mr. King repeated the whole verse this time, slowly and very softly; the little girl seemed to understand and enjoy every word: "'How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.'"

There was no more sleep after that, but Isabel

lay in quiet enjoyment while the dimness changed to dawn, and dawn to daylight. One by one sleepers began to arise, and another day had begun. Not many sounds were heard earlier than Rose's gentle tap at the door.

"You may come in. Isabel is much better," said Mr. King, answering the little girl's look.

"Really better?" said Rose, venturing near the bed. "Oh, I am so glad! And will she soon be well?"

"I hope so. If she goes on improving."

"I think she will, dear papa," said Rose; "I am so happy!"

"So am I," said her father, kissing the little face which so brightly proved the words. "But I hope you are something more than happy."

"More, papa?" said Rose, with some astonishment, as if she could hardly desire more than she had then.

"Yes. Something better than feeling only happy; though it generally brings happiness with it."

Still Rose looked inquiringly at him.

"The little birds felt happy this morning, when the first sunbeams came into their nest and awoke them. The lambs feel happy when they run and frisk in green meadows, and crop tender grass, and drink from cool streams; but a little girl who

knows where her happiness comes from, ought, while she feels it, to feel something higher."

Isabel looked wistfully at her sister. The look seemed to open Rose's understanding.

"Thankful, papa?" she said.

"Yes. Do you feel thankful? Shall we thank the Lord?"

"Yes, papa," said Rose, gravely.

She knelt beside her father at the bedside. Until then, she had but in part realized how much they had to be thankful for; to see Isabel patient and happy was to her so natural, that she had not asked herself from whence the patience and happiness arose; then her own name was mentioned; in what earnest prayer! It stirred the child's soul as nothing yet, not even the heavy grief a few days ago, had stirred it. She felt, as she had never yet felt, what it was to be outside the fold; to be still guiding her own steps, instead of having them "ordered by the Lord;" to be still keeping her own heart, instead of having answered the call, "Give me thine heart." She felt weary of her own way, and, with new force and sweetness, the invitation fell on her ears, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

As they rose from their knees, a knock was heard at the door, and Martha appeared.

"Oh, Martha!" was Rose's exclamation, "I didn't think you would come yet."

"Don't you want me?" said Martha. Her tone was softer, her face, though not yet trained to smiling, less stern in its expression.

"I do," said Isabel, fearing lest her faithful friend should be hurt. "Come and wish me good morning."

"And how are you?" said Martha. "Better, I think. I can tell that by your voice. And your eyes are brighter; we shall have you up and about soon. But excuse me, sir, we shall have you down," she continued, turning to Mr. King, "and that will be the worst has happened to us yet."

"Do not expect evil," replied Mr. King. "Now that you see what great trouble the Lord has brought us through, how he has turned our mourning into gladness, and given us the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, you might trust him for what is to follow. 'The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.' 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.'"

"Yes, sir, it's true," said Martha, humbly. "I did ought to know that now."

Mr. King left the room. Rose looked wistfully at Martha.

"I thought I could be with Isabel a little while," she said at last.

"So you shall. No one wants to send you away."

"But I wanted her to myself a little while."

"You didn't want me?" said Martha, smiling, instead of, as she would not long ago have done, looking angry at the thought. "Well, you shall be rid of me soon," she added, as Rose's silence confirmed this idea. "Just let her have some breakfast first; it's all ready."

"Oh, let me give it to her."

"Very well," said Martha; and she soon returned with a little tray.

"Now, I can do all the rest. I know how to put a shawl round her, and arrange the pillows for her to sit up, and stand the tray on the table beside her, and hand her the cup and the plate just when she wants them."

"Do you?" said Martha, a little doubtfully. "Well, if you won't have me, I'll go; only don't upset anything, or do any mischief."

"I think she will not," said Isabel; and Martha retired.

At first all Rose's attention was given to the perfect fulfilment of her duties. It was a great delight to her thus to wait on and take care of the sister who had so long and so faithfully cared for her; but presently the cup and the plate had been



handed for the last time, Isabel's pillows had been re-arranged, and Rose sat looking at her—very grave, very silent, with earnest eyes of a tell-tale brightness that suggested tears.

“What is it, dear?” said Isabel, at last.

The tears could no longer be controlled. Rose threw herself on the bed with a great cry of “Oh, Isabel! Isabel! if you had died!”

“Hush, hush, dear!” said Isabel.

“If you had,” said Rose, “it would have been all for me. You knew how dangerous it was, and yet you came. Anna said so. How could you! how could you!”

“Did you think I could have not done it?” said Isabel, gently. “Did you think there was anything I would not do for you?”

“No, no! But I have never loved you half enough. I never loved you so. I did not think of you then.”

“Hush, hush, dear!” said Isabel. “Do not let it make you unhappy; it made me happy.”

“If you had been killed!” said Rose again; “for me! How could you!”

“Did you think I could stand and see you fall?” said Isabel. “Did you think I would not try to help papa's little Rosebud, that he had intrusted to me? Mamma's own baby, that she left to me?” she added, softly passing her hand over the child's

shining curls. "But Rose," she continued presently, "there was another reason that made me forget my danger when I went to you." Isabel raised herself, and looked earnestly at her sister. "If you had fallen, you might have been killed. Did you think of that?"

"No; not then."

"I thought of it," said Isabel, "and I could not feel sure whether you were ready. I could not feel sure whether, if you fell all down that cliff and were killed, your soul would fall gently asleep in Jesus, and rise, and live for ever in heaven."

Rose's tears were dried. She met her sister's look with another as earnest; and now, in answer to her sister's words, she shook her head.

There was a long silence. Isabel, resting on her pillow, looked sadly at her little sister, whose face, tear-stained and troubled, was half-hidden in the bed-clothes.

"You feel that I did this for you because I loved you?" said Isabel at last.

"Oh yes!"

"And had I not reason to love you? Were you not my own dear little sister? And had you not loved me?"

"Yes, oh yes; indeed I had. But I hadn't loved you enough."

"Perhaps we never either of us shall love any one enough until the time when we are 'made perfect in love;' but I wanted to speak of something else just now. You wonder at my love in having done this for you—gone into danger to help you. But there is a love at which you might wonder much more; a greater love, which might melt your heart and make you cry, more than you cried just now when you thought of me."

Isabel raised herself, and, with cheeks a little flushed and eyes bright with earnestness, spoke slowly and deliberately.

"The love of Jesus, Rose, who not only went into danger, but 'unto death, even the death of the cross;' and not for those who loved him, but for sinners. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend;' 'but God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Oh, Rose, how glad I should be of my fall, how pleasant the little pain it has caused me would be, if it led you to think of the greater love of the Lord Jesus Christ—if it melted your heart, and made you come and lay yourself down at his feet! And then, Rose, you know he would receive you; for he has said, 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

“ ‘ He loves his little ones to teach,  
And put his truth within their reach ;  
And not the weakest e’er can say,  
I came, but I was sent away.’ ”

Surely out of the abundance of the child’s heart her mouth had spoken. She lay back once more, with closed eyes. Rose had followed every word, with desire almost as intense as her sister’s ; but this was not a time for much speaking, and when Isabel’s voice ceased, deep and unbroken silence succeeded. The hour which Martha permitted them alone passed away. She once more came into the room, and Rose, grave and silent, slipped away, and went down-stairs into the garden.

On each little blossom, on every green leaf and every blade of grass, on all the country round, on the clear sky above her, and on the face of the sun that crowned the whole with glory, to the child’s new sight was written, beside the word “ beauty,” which she long had read there, a new word—“ love ;” and deep in her heart, melting and humbling it, was the new-born experience of “ greater love.”





## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE DAY-STAR ARISING.

**I**SABEL continued to delight her many nurses and watchers by her steady improvement ; and at last there came a day when, laying aside convalescent habits, she took her place at the family table.

That day was Sunday—outwardly very pleasant, with a touch of September freshness in the air, but bright, to some at Little Cliff, with a glory that eyes could not see, but which hearts could feel.

It was late in the afternoon. The house was in that state of intense quiet which a summer Sunday alone can produce ; every clock might be plainly heard to tick. Mrs. Forrester had gone out. Mr. King sat near the pleasant drawing-room window that looked over the lawn and garden, with his little girls on either side of him.

Rose had been more silent than was usual with her all these days. She was not the first to break the stillness now ; Mr. King spoke himself

"My little Rosebud looks grave. Has not the pleasure of seeing Isabel among us once more sufficed to recall the smiles? Or is it excess of happiness?"

"Happiness, papa," replied Rose, with one of her brightest smiles.

"And you, my child?" said Mr. King, turning to Isabel.

There had been no need to ask the question; Isabel's look answered it.

"It should be a bright day to us."

"It is, papa," said Rose, fearing she had appeared gloomy.

"Why, Rose?"

"Because, papa, Isabel is nearly well, and we are all together again; and because it is such a fine day, and we can see such beautiful country."

"All this might have made us happy yesterday. Is there no reason why to-day should be bright above other days?" asked Mr. King. And Rose's look did not fall, nor her smile die away, as it had often before done at such questions.

"Yes, papa. This is the day on which our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead."

" 'The happy day on which 'twas said,  
The Lord is risen from the dead,' "

repeated Mr. King. "What more does the hymn say?"

And Rose, understanding her father's thought, continued—

“ ‘ Let all who love the Lord rejoice,  
And bless his name with cheerful voice.’ ”

There she stopped. Something in her manner—in the steady, earnest look with which she met his—encouraged him to put the next question.

“ Can you rejoice ? ”

A moment of silence followed. Not the silence of doubt—he that overcometh all things had overcome and put away doubts from the child's mind ; but she felt how solemn a question she was going to answer. A deep colour overspread her face, and her eyes fell ; but soon were raised again as, with an unfaltering voice, she replied,—

“ Yes, papa, I can.”

Those two little words, half-whispered—how happy they made the two listeners ! The little speaker was drawn close into her father's arms.

“ Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift,” he replied.

And Isabel's tears were dropping fast—tears of joy, the only tokens of thanksgiving that would come in that first moment of long looked-for brightness.

A long stillness was interrupted at last by a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Mr. King ; and Anna appeared.

"If you please, sir," she said, "there's an old man at the door as won't go away. He says he wants to see Miss King."

"Who can it be, Isabel?"

"I don't know, indeed. I do not know of any old man who would come to see me."

"I will go and speak to him," said Mr. King, rising.

He followed Anna to the kitchen, where an old man stood waiting.

"Sit down," were Mr. King's first words, as he saw that his visitor with difficulty supported himself between his stick and the table. "Did you wish to see my little girl?"

"That I did, sir," replied the old man. "I thought if I could catch a sight of her blessed face again, it would be better to me nor a sermon. So I says to daughter, 'Instead of dragging me to the church, we'll just go the other way this afternoon.' Most Sunday afternoons she takes me to church. It's not far I can go ; but the church stands handy. But somehow this afternoon, when I heard Miss was coming round, I felt I couldn't live another hour without getting sight of her. It's only Sundays I can go out, you see ; for I'm too feeble to walk alone, and daughter says she can't be at the



trouble of dressing me and dragging me 'long when she comes in from work. I warrant, now, ye'll never be served so. Ye ain't dependent on other folk yet ; but if ye were ever so, I warrant ye'll be safe enough with Miss."

The man seemed to expect an answer to his suggestion.

"I think I need not feel uneasy as to whether my little girl will take care of her father when he requires it ; but it is still my part to take care of her," replied Mr. King. But as he did not wish then to enter on a comparison between his little daughter and the old man's, he tried to lead him back to his first subject. "She does not seem to remember you as well as you have remembered her. She was not able to tell me who you might be."

"I'm Matthew Hardy, sir ; she'll mind the name, I daresay."

"Matthew Hardy ? I have not heard the name ; but my little girl, having been ill ever since I came, has not spoken of many things."

"I'll be bound there's *one* thing she hasn't forgot to speak on," said Matthew, his face brightening. "Hasn't she spoke to you of the Lord Jesus, and what he done for us ? She wasn't half an hour in my house ; and yet, afore she left, she'd spoke so as

I'll never forget it. I can mind the very words she said—'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' I dun' know who he was as spoke 'em, but he was a blessed man surely ; for now, sir, I've come to think it's a happier thing to feel one's a sinner than to feel one ain't so particular bad."

"It is indeed," replied Mr. King.

"Well, sir, daughter's very contrary, takes after her uncle, sir, as was known all over Little Cliff, for a violent temper, and lookin' and lookin' at her, I'd got to think I wasn't so bad. I read my Bible regular, and never neglected prayer, nor wasn't ill-tempered, leastways not unless I was put out overmuch ; but, sir, when I see'd your little lady (and though I didn't look at her much above ten minutes, I saw her often and often after that, in my mem'ry like, whiles I sat alone, and particular when I heard she was so bad and lay like to die), well, when I thought on her, I felt I was a long way behind."

"How?"

"Well, sir"—Matthew was silent, searching for an explanation. At last the bright look came over his face, and he spoke again. "I felt, as it might be, like a bad shilling beside a good shilling. Take one alone and perhaps you might be deceived, but put 'em alongside, and the difference come out plain. After

thinking and thinking, I come to think I wasn't the good coin. I couldn't a'bear to be looking at myself after that, so I just looked off at Miss and, sir, you couldn't long look at her without remembering her words; so I took to looking at them, not in the book, I can't see that now, but they seemed to be writ on everything else as clear as day, so fixing my mind on them, specially the first two, which weren't like words, but like a fire alive in my heart, I come to find as not only I *wasn't* the good coin, but never *could* be. Says I, Matthew, you're a sinner, not the chief, you never will be chief of nothing, but you are a sinner, and 'Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' Bless you, sir! and maybe you'll not believe me, that name gave me a vast deal more comfort than the name of a good man, which I'd so long been trying to keep."

"I can well believe it," said Mr. King. "That name is the only starting-point from which to find true comfort. And so, my little girl first led you to think of the blessedness prepared for sinners."

"Yes, sir, she did truly. Now, perhaps, you'll understand how it is I've such a longing to see the little lady again. If I might make so bold, I'd ask you to carry her this fruit, with my duty, and tell her how pleased I should be if she'd let me have a sight of her face."

Matthew, while he spoke, took from the table a little round basket, where six soft peaches lay among fresh vine leaves, and handed it to Mr. King.

"You shall offer your kind present yourself," said the latter. "Come with me. You will find my little girls in the drawing-room."

"Ye have two then," said Matthew. "You are fortunate, leastways, if they be both of the same mind."

How glad the father was that he could answer, "Yes; come and see them," he said again.

"Thank you, sir," said Matthew rising. "I've heard as how your young lady has been about again and round the garden, this two or three days since. I've had news of her regular; every day Mr. Philip come to tell me how she did, he told me of you too, so that I made bold to come here to-day. He's wonderful changed is Mr. Philip, since Miss had that fall; he come straight off the next day to see me, as though he'd guessed I had a liking for her, and there he sit beside me, as quiet as myself; and since she's been getting better, he's come and talked with me quite like a respectable lad, instead of so wild you was frightened to see him."

Matthew had stood leaning on his staff to make this speech; he could not trust himself to walk while speaking, and now, with slow, careful steps,

he followed Mr. King out of the kitchen, along the strange passages, to the drawing-room door. There he stood a moment, partly awed but chiefly delighted at the scene on which it opened. The softly carpeted floor, the graceful drapery of the window, the tasteful furniture and many ornaments in different parts of the room, were beauties to which the old man's eyes were unaccustomed; but the little figure in the large arm-chair, and the sweet smiling face, were pictures which long had floated dimly in his mind, and which he had long desired, though at one time it seemed without hope, to see again. The first sight of the pale face and the look of welcome and recognition in the soft eyes, almost overcame him, his hands shook so that his little gift was in danger of falling, but Rose, at a look from her sister, came forward and placed a chair beside the old man.

"Here is some one who has thought a great deal of you, and has brought you finer peaches than you ever saw away from Little Cliff," said Mr. King, taking the basket from Matthew's trembling hands and gently forcing him into the seat which Rose had prepared.

"It is Matthew," said Isabel. "You are very kind." Then, at sight of the fruit, a deep blush overspread her face, as she remembered the accident

by which she had first partaken of the produce of the old man's garden.

"You haven't forgot me neither," he said, pleased at her ready recollection of his name.

"No. What beautiful peaches! From your garden? It was very good of you."

"No, no. I don't know as I can call 'em a gift, for that money I took once of yourn has lain on my mind ever since."

"You must not feel so," interrupted Isabel. "These peaches are a gift."

Old Matthew was silent in polite obedience. He sat a little while longer, seeming to enjoy to the full the look he had come to ask for. At last he rose. "Now ma'am," he said, bowing as low as his feebleness would permit, "I must be going, but if ye knew the pleasure you give me this day, ye'd be as pleased as I be. Daughter's awaiting for me outside, and I promised I'd not be long."

"Good-bye," said Isabel.

The old man still stood before her chair and seemed not yet quite ready to take his leave. At last he spoke, in a half-shy voice: "Do you mind the words you read me when you was at my house?"

Isabel thought for a moment. So much had befallen her since that day, that it seemed removed

into the far past. "I think I do," she replied presently: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

"That's it!" said Matthew. "Well; I've minded it too."

With this he turned away, and after a fresh series of bows at the door, was once more conducted by Mr. King to the kitchen.

When her father returned, Isabel told him the story of the green-gages, and of the first visit to Matthew. "But papa," she said, when her account was ended, "you must not think ill of Philip; he has had no one to teach him, and I do think he has a wish to know and love what is right. I should like to see him again!"

"What is it you would like?" said Mrs. Forrester, who at this moment entered the room. "I hardly think I ever heard you wishing for anything before, so now you must tell me what this is, that I may get it for you, if possible."

Isabel looked at her aunt; she remembered that lady's aversion to Philip, and was sorry that now her words had been overheard, for she knew it would grieve her aunt to refuse her desire, and yet did not suppose it to be one she could grant.

Mrs. Forrester turned to Rose, "You will tell me, Rose. What was it?"

"She wanted to see Philip."

Mrs. Forrester did not look surprised or displeased; on the contrary, a smile was on her face as she left the room. She turned, when she reached the door. "Will you come with me, Rose?"

A look at her father, to assure herself of his approbation, and the little girl, with a good deal of pleasure and some curiosity, followed her aunt out at the glass door, across the lawn, and along the broad gravel pathway under the wall.

"Where are we going, aunt?" said Rose at last. "I haven't my hat on."

"Never mind," said Mrs. Forrester. "We are not going far."

"Not beyond the garden?"

"I think not."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to find something for Isabel."

"What? Flowers?"

"No."

"No?"

"Cannot you guess what I am looking for? What did Isabel wish for, just now?"

"Philip. Are you looking for him?"

"Yes. Do you think you could find him? You seem generally to see him somewhere when you walk in the garden."



"I daresay I can," was Rose's ready answer. She ran to Philip's usual seat on the wall, a little further back than the front of the house, behind a number of laurel bushes; she could not see him there,—on into the wood-yard and climbed over the fagots where they two had sat, in their first hour of grief and terror. Her aunt followed, forgetting, in her anxiety to have Philip, what she would at any other time have resented as most improper behaviour in her niece.

Having mounted two or three logs, and standing there on tiptoe, Rose could command a somewhat precarious view of the garden.

"There he is!" she exclaimed at last, "coming out of the house and walking down the garden. He has his hat on too. Where can he be going?"

"Call him," said Mrs. Forrester. "Quickly! he will be gone."

"Philip! Philip!" called Rose; and the little voice, always so welcome, and which had been so often heard from that very spot, reached his ears and arrested his hasty steps, when, perhaps, a stronger would have been disregarded.

"Aunt Forrester wants you," said Rose, as he approached.

Wonderful words! And oh! more wonderful sight! There was Mrs. Forrester, stepping on the

logs, with a pleasantly spoken, "How do you do, Philip?"

He was so amazed that, at first, he did not answer.

"Quite well, thank you," he said at last. Then, with some hesitation, as doubting whether his right to ask the question would be recognized, "How is Isabel?"

"Come and see yourself," was Mrs. Forrester's reply, given with a smile.

Philip could hardly believe his ears; certainly he could not at first comprehend the fact that he had been actually invited, by Mrs. Forrester herself, to pay a visit to Isabel, with whom he had been formerly but unwillingly permitted to exchange a word.

"Will you come in and spend an hour or two with us?" said Mrs. Forrester. "Isabel wishes to see you, and we came out on purpose to look for you."

Rose's smile and eager, "Do come, Philip," assisted in recalling his scattered wits.

His ready speech and own lively manner returned, as, taking off his unusual addition of a hat, he made answer: "You are very kind. Nothing would please me more."

"Nothing will please us more," replied Mrs. For-

rester, quite delighted at the idea of bringing Philip as a trophy of victory, and offering him to Isabel as some atonement for the severity she feared she had formerly shown towards the little girl's innocent friendship.

"Thank you. I will follow you in five minutes, if you will allow me," said Philip.

"We will wait for you here," said Mrs. Forrester.

Away ran Philip; with wonder, haste, and pleasure, almost beside himself. Thanks to his Sunday trim, his preparation for the marvellous event was neither so long nor so arduous as it might have been. But that troublesome hair! It must be made to lie smooth and at a respectful distance from his eyebrows. What might and energy could do, its owner did; there was very little of the wild Indian glory left when at last he concluded his operations, and, notwithstanding his hurry, the novelty of his appearance, and the strange sight of his own forehead exposed to view, made him do, what perhaps he had never done before, spend a moment in contemplating himself before the glass. Then down the stairs, four steps at a time, and out at the back door—he seldom honoured the front door. In the garden he stopped; something made him turn and run back to the house—"Granny," he called, as he reached a half-closed door, and a voice from within replying, encouraged him to push it open and enter.

In the further corner of the room, beside a little fire—burnt this summer evening more from habit than necessity—sat an old lady, as small, as quiet, as timid-looking, as her grandson was big, and boisterous, and bold-looking : a little old lady dressed in Sunday-black satin, with a white woollen shawl, so fine and elaborately knitted as to resemble lace, thrown over her shoulders. “Granny, I’m going out.”

“Now ? I thought it was tea-time,” was the reply, given slowly, in a feeble voice. “When shall you return ?”

“Not sooner than I can help.”

“But it is tea-time,” again objected the old lady.

“I don’t care about tea.”

“Who would think it was Sunday ; you racing about in this manner, and neglecting your food.”

“It’s not part of Sunday’s duties to eat bread and cake, is it ? I am going to do something better than that ; but I can’t stop now. Take a nap while I’m gone, and wake up to hear all about it when I come back ; good-bye.”

This last unaccustomed attention was almost lost in his hasty shutting of the door. There was no time to waste ; he ran down the garden, and out at the gate, somewhat to the damage of his hair ; but that was forgotten now, for Rose and Mrs. Forrester

stood at the other gate, waiting for him. Rose could hardly recognize her former friend, in the neatly-dressed and really good-looking boy who walked beside Mrs. Forrester, apologising so politely for having kept her waiting ; but they reached the house, and Mrs. Forrester opened the drawing-room door.

“There, wishing was not useless this time,” she said, as with great triumph and joy she presented Philip.

A feeling, half-sad, half-pleasant came over him, as he once more stood beside Isabel. The very faint colour on her cheeks, the added softness which weakness had given to her eyes, and the extreme whiteness of the little hand, held out to welcome him, reminded him of all she had suffered ; he felt towards her as she had once done to the harebells, and hardly ventured to take the offered hand ; but the soft clear voice of surprise and pleasure in which his name was uttered, and the smile which broke like a sunbeam over all her face as she spoke, was so pleasant to him, that he forgot everything but enjoyment ; such enjoyment—so quiet, so deep and profitable, as poor Philip had never known before ; but he seemed to carry away its atmosphere, when late in the evening he left. The hours spent there, the words spoken and listened to there, were never

forgotten. That Sunday evening in the quiet drawing-room precious seed had been sown.

"And some fell upon good ground."

"I am afraid you must be tired, dear," said Mr. King, as, when Philip was gone, he carried her upstairs, and consigned her to Martha's care.

"No, papa; this has been such a happy day."

A look at her little sister as she spoke showed to what happiness she alluded. "And dear Aunt Forrester, how kind she has been! Papa, I do think that as you said, better than learning to love me, she is learning to love the Lord Jesus; but I think she is learning both. And Philip!"

"It has indeed been a happy day," said her father.

"With so much of blessing in it, that I think now nothing could spoil it. What do you think?"

"Nothing, papa," said Isabel.

"Not even if I were to tell you that I must leave you to-morrow?"

The smiles for a moment died out from the two little listening faces. Isabel's came back first. "Not even that," she said. "But must you really go?"

"Yes; I would not if I could help it, but not for long, a shorter time than I think you expect. Can you give me two days?"

"Will you come back in two days, papa?" said Rose, with new animation.

"I hope so. I want to take you to the sea-side."

"Sea-side!" exclaimed Rose. "Really beside the sea? What sea?" For a moment her thoughts flew to the Red Sea and White Sea, whose easy names occurred most readily to her mind; but an instant's reflection brought her to the conclusion that watering-places on those shores were not the most likely to be chosen by her father.

Perhaps he guessed the thought which had prompted her question, for he laughed as he answered, "The Irish Sea or St. George's Channel, I think. Not *the* Great Sea exactly; but with waves in it, large enough and long enough to make my little girl open those bright eyes of wonder that she shows me sometimes; and with breezes blowing from it, fresh enough and salt enough to change my white rosebud to a full-blown damask, and to send her running races with sea-birds along the shore and over the rocks, and winning, too, perhaps."

"Papa!" Rose laughed.

"Now, you must dream instead of talk about it, for it is late. I must wish you good-night, and good-bye I think it will be to Isabel at least, for I leave very early to make the most of my time. Good-night and good-bye, my own precious little girl."

He had sat all this time with Isabel in his arms, and now he put her down.

"Is there anything you want from home?" he asked; for he thought he noticed a wistful look in her eyes.

"Papa, dear," she said, "if you are not too busy or too tired when you are at home, will you go and see Mary. I have left her so long, and have not even written to her; and while we are so happy, I am afraid she is very lonely."

"It shall be my first care," said Mr. King.

Then he looked at Rose. She, in her turn, was lifted in his arms; he kissed her once or twice before he spoke. "My own dear little Rose," he said, "could I leave her in better circumstances than now, when she has cried unto God, 'My Father, thou art the guide of my youth.' The Lord is her shepherd, she shall not want."

As if involuntarily, the hymn of praise and assurance followed, the children joining their voices:—

"My Shepherd is the Lamb,  
The living Lord who died:  
With all things good I ever am  
By him supplied.  
He richly feeds my soul  
With blessing from above;  
And leads me where the rivers roll,  
Of endless love.

"My soul he doth restore  
Whene'er I go astray;  
He makes my cup of joy run o'er  
From day to day.



His love, so full, so free,  
Anoints my head with oil ;  
Mercy and goodness follow me,  
Fruit of his toil.

“ When faith and hope shall cease,  
And love abide alone ;  
Then shall I see him face to face,  
And know as known.  
Still shall I lift my voice,  
His praise my song shall be ;  
And I will in his love rejoice  
Who died for me.”





## CHAPTER XX.

### PATIENCE.

**E**ARLY on the next morning after his departure, Mr. King stood before Mrs. Mason's door ; it was opened by Mary herself. The months that had passed had told on the old black frock ; it looked dustier and browner, many patches had been added, and darns were not wanting. Its wearer, too, looked somewhat as though she had been used enough and needed refreshing ; she had come to the door dull and weary, as she often felt now ; the colour and roundness had almost faded from her cheeks, and had taken with them the brightness from her eyes. Mr. King, perhaps from his careful watching of his own little girl, took more note of the tales that little faces tell than many, and he was struck and pained by the one that now met his, so grave, so spiritless, so unchildlike ! Patience was seen there still, but pleasure had fled away. Fled away, but not far ; she came back, and once more shone,

rosy and sparkling, over all the features, at sight of the visitor.

Mary forgot shyness in eagerness and delight. "Mr. King!" she exclaimed; and he could recognize the little girl who had made one of their happy party in the fields, as she held the door wider open, and asked with a mixture of pleasure and sadness, "How is Isabel, please?"

"Better; nearly well," replied Mr. King. "I come by her especial request to-day. She feared you would think yourself forgotten; but you had heard of her accident."

"Oh yes; from Miss Elliot. She was very kind, she came two or three times to tell me how Isabel was."

"Now, I have come on purpose to spend a little time with you," said Mr. King; "is it to be here at the door?"

"I don't know," replied Mary, much embarrassed. "Mrs. Mason would like to see you in the parlour; but then"—she stopped short.

In the parlour, Mrs. Mason would take care to have her full share, and more than her share, of the visitor's attention. Mary felt that there no benefit to herself would result from the visit; she should feel shy and ill at ease, and would have to leave unsaid the many questions she wished to ask about

her little friends, and unheard, all the good things she hoped might fall from her older friend's lips.

He read her thoughts.

"Perhaps we could take a walk together ; the open air would be our parlour. But I should like to see Mrs. Mason first."

Mary admitted him ; not into the little room which, spite of its dull view of brick walls and back windows, was bright to her with the remembrance of Isabel's visits ; but into a room looking on the street, lighter and larger, and gay, though hardly bright, with bunches of artificial flowers and gorgeous tapestry work.

Here Mr. King waited a long time before Mrs. Mason appeared. She showed to great advantage this morning, feeling a little restrained by her visitor's presence, expressing much concern at Isabel's accident, and being easily prevailed upon to grant the request which Mr. King asked as a favour, not only to himself but to his little girl at home.

Meanwhile, Mary, full of tremulous anxiety as to her friend's success, had laid her hat and jacket on the bed, and with neatly smoothed hair and beating heart, now sat by her open door, waiting for the summons which she longed yet dreaded to hear.

If it should be only to wish him good-bye ! to see him go down the street, and then return to the

weary, weary life, which seemed to have reduced all her graces to one, namely, patience ; but patience was faithful and did not desert her, even in this moment of anxious expectation.

“ And patience worketh experience.” It did so now ; experience of how bright days He who careth for the sparrows, and feedeth the young ravens when they cry, can send to cheer the heart of a child who patiently waits on him.

The looked-for moment came at last. Thanks to Mrs. Mason’s custom of making her communications from wherever she happened to stand, without regard to the whereabouts of the person she addressed, Mary was not kept in suspense. For once the tones were welcome.

“ Mary ! Put on your things to walk with Mr. King ! Make yourself neat, and look sharp !”

This last injunction was by no means needed ; the echo of the unmodulated voice had hardly died away, before the sound of little footsteps was on the stairs.

“ There !” said Mrs. Mason, as her little charge appeared. “ I said to myself, ten to one she’ll never think of changing her frock ; and she hasn’t. I never saw a child with so little respect for herself.”

Indignant colour overspread Mary’s face. Thus to have the garment which had already caused her

so many instants of bitter shame, called into notice, and herself charged with want of propriety, was beyond endurance. "I haven't another frock ; you know I haven't," was the hasty answer which rose to her lips ; but she had been taught prudence by sad experience, and after the first word was silent.

But Mr. King noticed the quick rising colour, and the words that died on the quivering lips ; and perceiving that something was amiss, hurried the child away.

He was so sorry for her, so anxiously planning ways and means of alleviating her lot, that he might have spent the whole time of the walk in silent pondering ; but he was determined that at least one happy hour should brighten that day for Mary, and laid himself out to please and interest her, as he so well knew how.

They chose the quietest streets, and those that led furthest from the town ; but before they had walked very far, Mary, unaccustomed to open-air exercise, and excited as she had been by pleasure and surprise, began to feel tired. Her companion perceived it almost as soon as she did.

"You are getting tired, I am afraid," he said.

"Oh no ; or, at least I do not mind it at all," replied Mary, afraid lest he should hasten their return on her account.

"But I do," said Mr. King. "What do you say to our resting in this wood-yard? These newly-cut planks will make us a nice seat, and I think we shall be both harmless and unharmed. You are not as good a walker as you were last time you were with me. How often have you been out since then?"

"Only on Sundays," was the somewhat sadly-given answer.

"Never in the week?"

"No, never. Mrs. Mason does not like me to go out."

"Except on Sundays?"

"She would not allow it then. I know she would not, for it always put her out; but she promised grandmamma, before she died and left me, that she would do so. Grandmamma knew that Mrs. Mason did not care for going out on Sundays, at least not where grandmamma liked me to go, and so, when she was ill, she made Mrs. Mason promise that she would never prevent my going."

"You have been with Mrs. Mason some time then?"

"Oh, a long time."

Mr. King was silent for a minute. "Perhaps, dear child, you will not be able to answer what I am going to say; perhaps it will pain you, if so, I

will be content without an answer, and you must try to forget my words ; but I cannot help wondering how you ever came to be left in Mrs. Mason's house."

"When my papa went away the last time," replied Mary, "he left me with grandmamma, and we lodged at Mrs. Mason's. You know she takes lodgers now. It was very different then ; grandmamma soon fell ill, and Mrs. Mason used to manage everything for her, and was always saying how fond she was of me, and used to take me out and be very kind to me. Grandmamma died very suddenly at last, and I was left alone. When the news reached papa he wrote and begged Miss Elliot to take me. I used to go to her school then. I should have liked to live with her, but she said she never could take boarders, as all her time, when she was not teaching, had to be given to Mrs. Elliot."

"Yes. The old lady is blind and very infirm," said Mr. King. "Go on, dear."

"Miss Elliot was sorry to be obliged to refuse, and she told papa of another school, kept by a friend of hers, where she was sure I should be happy. She wanted me to be sent there, but papa would not do so ; he said he hoped to be home very soon, and meantime I was to stay with Mrs. Mason, and be at Miss Elliot's all day. But then"—



Many times, as she told her tale, Mary's voice had been broken by rising tears, now they could be repressed no longer. They were wept out ; flowing, not as they had often done, from the cold feeling of hopelessness at her heart, but softer, warmer tears, from the fountain of tender memories, stirred by the protecting touch of the hand that held hers.

"Then," said Mr. King, when at last he thought it time to check the sobs that shook the little form, now almost resting in his arms, "then God called your father home, and left you only himself to look to. Can you trust his faithfulness and love who has called himself the Father of the fatherless?"

"Yes," was the answer given between the sobs.

"The way has been trying. 'The trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth.' God grant, my child, that it may 'be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'"

"I do look for that," said Mary, in a calmer voice.

"And the look of faith will not be disappointed. 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' God will give, not only patience under trial, but confidence and rejoicing in the bearing of it."

Mr. King took a hymn-book from his pocket, and read :—

“ We expect a bright to-morrow,  
All will be well.  
Faith can sing through days of sorrow,  
All, all is well.  
On our Father’s love relying,  
Jesus every need supplying,  
Or in living, or in dying,  
All must be well.”

Before the verse was ended Mary’s head was raised ; she was able to look at the reader as the last words fell from his lips. There was a moment of silence, not empty, but filled with the melody made in their hearts to the Lord.

Then Mr. King spoke again. “ I think we must leave our seat if you are rested. I will not try Mrs. Mason’s patience too long, lest I should make myself an unwelcome visitor.”

Mary rose, and the way home seemed all too short, but the street looked brighter to her already, and a glorious sunbeam fell upon her attic window ; she opened her heart to receive it, and at the door turned a happy, as well as a patient face, to wish her friend “ Good-bye.”

“ Not quite yet,” he said. “ I am going to pay Mrs. Mason another visit.”

It was a long one. Mary was beginning to fear that Mr. King might have left without her knowledge, when Mrs. Mason’s voice was again heard repeating her name in a somewhat subdued key.

Now that the moment of leave-taking really had come, Mary felt all the hardness of the task. She came down the stairs more slowly and noiselessly than she had done in answer to the former summons.

But Mr. King was not in the hall. Mrs. Mason, with a strange quietness in her manner, led the little girl into the parlour. The visitor had not risen from his seat, and did not seem in any haste to be gone. He drew the little girl to his side, and holding her hand, gave her a look which, though it made her heart beat fast with an expectation that she could not understand, sent a strange quietness and strength through all her thoughts.

"Mary," he said, "do you feel the better for your walk?"

"Yes," said Mary, with heartiness which even Mrs. Mason's presence could not restrain.

"Should you like a few more walks with me?"

"Oh, I should, very much!"

"And with Isabel and Rose?"

"Oh, Mr. King, are they coming home soon?"

"Not yet. I want them to try the sea-air. What do you think it will do for them?"

"Make them very happy I should think," said Mary.

"And what could it do for you?"

"I don't know," answered Mary. She did not see any use in entering on this speculation.

"I can guess," said Mr. King; "I daresay it would bring back the rosy cheeks that you have put away somewhere, with the nimble feet that ran over the fields one day last spring. Will you try if I have guessed rightly? Will you come and help Isabel to pick up sea-weeds and sea-roses?"

"Come! With you?"

"Yes; Mrs. Mason will lend you to us for a few weeks. Will you agree?"

"Oh, Mr. King! Mrs. Mason!"

The little girl looked at her; she seemed to have given her authority into her visitor's hands, for she remained silent and passive.

"Going with you!" continued Mary, awaking slowly to the delights of the prospect before her. "To see Isabel and Rose, and spend days and days like that one I spent before! Oh, how good you are!"

"Then I may count on you, that if I call in two days about this time you will not disappoint me. I have a journey to take before then."

"Oh, I will be ready!"

"I think you will, for you must come just as you are. Martha shall do your packing at Little Cliff; you will have to leave your concerns in her

hands while you are with us ; for, you know, she does not like her dominions invaded. Now, I must leave you," he said, rising ; " but one thing, Isabel will expect me to-morrow. I intended to have returned then ; may I leave you to write, and tell her the reason of my delay ?"

" Oh, I'm sorry ! I am the reason."

" That must not make you sorry ; it will delight no one more than Isabel, except perhaps myself. Good-bye, dear child. Run and open the door." He kissed her, and then turned to Mrs. Mason, offering his hand.

" I think you too will not regret your kindness, and I hope will understand my gratitude. I will not forget my promise of finding some one to save you inconvenience during the time of Mary's absence."

With this he took leave, and Mary, shutting the door after him, could hardly assure herself that this day had not been a bright dream. But awaking, two days after, she found the dream was true.





## CHAPTER XXI.

### P E A C E.

**A**UTUMN was dropping silently, in showers of crimson and gold, over all the woods and hill-sides, when our children bade a farewell, regretful, yet given with smiles, to the scenes with which so many bright pages of their life's little story had been interwoven.

Mary, Isabel, Rose, their father, and even Martha, it was hard to say which smiled the oftenest, or who among them most ardently longed for the moment when "the great sea"—as Rose still called it—would meet their expectant eyes.

Long before those eyes were gratified, their owners had fancied that in every sound they heard the rolling of waves, and every breath of wind seemed to taste of the ocean's salt; but these shadows of imagination were forgotten when at last the reality appeared before them. First, an expanse like a great sheet of silver, crossed in the middle by a pathway of gold, where the sun, a ball of flaming scarlet,

was sinking into the water ; nearer the shore scores of little black boats, with white sails, riding merrily up and down upon whiter crested waves ; nearer yet, miles of smooth sands that looked golden, great rocks that shadowed and sobered all ; crowds of little children, barefoot and joyous, with scanty garments and plentiful locks, blown hither and thither by the same little breeze that carried their voices nearer and nearer, till they reached the eager watchers, and broke the stillness that had fallen upon them. Pleasure and admiration had made them silent.

Happily, however, this effect of pleasure is not of long duration, otherwise those weeks might have been very silent indeed ; but they were not. Rose learnt to dance like the little waves, and flew like the sea-birds over rocks and sand, and shouted like the little fisher children, and grew round and rosy, as they were. Isabel and Mary, too, responded to the touch of the sea-breeze, and now, running home, after a long afternoon spent on the beach, would scarcely have been recognized for the little girls who, a few weeks before, had resembled the waves more for whiteness than sprightliness.

Suddenly, while at full speed, Mary stopped and seized her friend's hand.

"What is it ?" said Isabel.

"Did you not hear some one speak?"

"No; I did not notice anything."

"Oh, I heard some one—that gentleman, see, standing over there by the fisherman. And oh, Isabel, his voice made me think of papa! I do not know how it was, in a moment I felt as if my own papa was standing talking at my side."

"Oh, Mary, did you?" said Isabel. "How strange!"

"I wish I could see him. I *should* like to hear him speak again."

"Do not," said Isabel, for the tears were filling Mary's eyes. "Let us run home; we are late. Do you really wish to see the gentleman?" she added, as Mary still stood looking back.

At that moment the stranger turned from the man to whom he had been speaking, and with hasty steps came towards them. Mary stood looking earnestly, and her little friend waited by her side until he was within a yard of them, then they felt shy, and would have turned, but were accosted in an eager voice,—

"I am told," said the gentleman, addressing Mary as the elder of the two, "that your name is King."

"This is Isabel King," said Mary, taking her friend's hand.



"And yours?" was the next eager question.

"Mary Rivers."

"Mary! Can this be the little Mary for whom I have been looking so long? The little Mary, in search of whom I came thousands of miles across the sea? The naughty little Mary, whom, when I reached my destination, I found just run away?"

Mary looked at him in great amazement, with changing colour and fast-coming breath.

"And does she not know me?" continued the speaker.

"No."

"Did you never hear of your uncle James?"

"Oh yes. Are you Uncle James?"

"To be sure I am;" and taking her in his arms, he gave her such a shower of kisses as seldom fell to any one's share.

"Now, will you believe that I am Uncle James?" he said at last, setting her on her feet. "Found at last!" he continued, taking her hand and leading her along, still in a maze of surprise. "I was in despair when I reached your other abode and found you flown; when I got here this afternoon, and had the two little girls running past pointed out to me as Mr. King's, I could hardly believe my good fortune. But where are you taking me?"

"Home; to Mr. King's house. He is so good,

he brought me here with his little girls. But here they all come."

Isabel, as soon as she had understood the news, had run to carry it to her father, who, now coming up, greeted the stranger with a welcome almost as warm as that he had bestowed upon his new-found niece.

Soon after they all were seated in the little sea-side parlour. Mr. Rivers sat with Mary on his knee, holding her hand, stroking her soft hair, and seeming scarcely able to take his eyes from her.

"Excuse me," he said at last, "I have had this little girl so long on my mind, that I find it hard to believe my good fortune in having her now actually before my eyes. Poor little girl!" he continued; "what a strange Uncle James she must have thought she had, to have left her all this time without coming to claim her."

"Oh, I am not poor!" exclaimed Mary, almost the first words she had found voice to utter; "and I haven't been poor for a long time now."

She took Isabel's hand, who sat beside her.

"Is this the secret of your riches?" asked her uncle, noticing the movement; "a very nice secret indeed, and a very sure one, I should say. But you must give a share in it and yourself to me now."

Mary, for answer, laid her head on her uncle's shoulder. Every moment he won on her affection, every tone of his voice recalled more forcibly the one which so long had been unheard save in memory. But one question remained now to the perfect fulfilment of her enjoyment. Did this new-found father resemble the other in that which had formed his chief beauty, in that which had hallowed his remembrance to his child, in that which had shone so brightly in every word, and look, and action, that it remained clearly defined though other traits had been dimmed or had died out in her mind. The earnest pondering of this question kept her grave and silent.

"And are you not going to call me to account for having left you all these months, and having only come to you when you are so well off, that I fear you will regard me as an intruder?"

"No," replied Mary.

"No? Do you care so little about it?"

"Not that, but I am sure you came as soon as you could."

"So you trust me. A very good starting-point; but I want to explain, if not for your satisfaction, for Mr. King's."

Nevertheless, he still addressed himself to the child.

“Since the day I first heard that, while I was in America, a share of my heart was called upon to travel over to England for a little niece I had there, I may safely say that another has never passed in which she has not been present to my mind ; but since that other day, just a year ago, that my poor little girl must remember so well, she can never know how often I have thought of her, how large a portion of my heart has been over here with her, nor how often and how anxiously I have longed to hold her in my arms, as I hold her now, to protect, and to love, and to comfort, and make happy. Now, if I had had my own way, I should have started on the very day the letter reached me ; but, dear child, I haven’t. I have given it up, and He to whom I have committed its direction said to me just then, Stay here, lie down helplessly and trust your child to me. Do you know who that was?—who it was that, while I lay useless and powerless thousands of miles away, kept my little girl as the apple of his eye, and hid her under the shadow of his wing ?”

“Yes, I do know,” answered Mary, meanwhile answering that other question in her heart, with a great bound of joy.

“Then you will understand that I felt it better for you that I should be away, though it was trying to me to bear ; and though, while I lay on my sick-

bed, beside me lay your dear father's letter, in which he said he left you for me whenever he should be taken from you—little knowing, when he wrote, how soon that time would be—I could feel that it was well with you, and could let anxiety give way to confidence and peace."

Peace! How it filled the room now, when the speaker ceased! How it fell, and rested softly on his heart and on the hearts of his listeners! In its atmosphere we will leave them. As Mr. King once said, could we leave them in better circumstances, than as each possessing that "treasure, the which, when a man hath found, he hideth?"

" 'Tis the treasure I've found in his love  
That has made me a pilgrim below;  
And 'tis there, when I reach him above,  
As I'm known, all his fulness I'll know."



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